

EVERY MONTH: K9 Queries – 16 pages of reader questions answered by our experts

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Dogs

MONTHLY

APRIL 2016



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Hello!

Many animal charities have been having a hard time of late. Resources are stretched, expectations run high, and more and more people are turning to them for help. Battersea Dogs & Cats Home is just one of those who've reported a huge increase in the number of pets handed over to them because their owners can no longer afford to pay for veterinary care.

So it's always good to hear about some of the positive things happening at charities, like the building of Battersea's new medical centre, due to open this summer. We went along for a sneak preview of how the work's progressing – find out more on p10.

It's not all about facilities, of course. What makes the biggest difference to charities large and small are its volunteers, like Toni and her rescue Shih Tzu, Maggie-May (p34), a Pets As Therapy dog who visits schools as part of the Read2Dogs scheme. Perhaps you volunteer for an animal charity, too? We'd love to hear from you if you do, and will print as many stories as we can.

Spring will be here before we know it, so it's time to look ahead to some of this year's exciting dog shows and events. If you've bought your copy of the magazine early in the month, turn to p18 for our Crufts preview, with the fab four Friends For Life finalists and news of some alternative competitions you might want to look out for at the show.

On p28 you can read all about DogFest North and DogFest South, both in June – and we would really love you to join us at one, the other, or both! If you think you might be able to come along and help out – and have lots of fun into the bargain – so much the better, so do get in touch!

Until next month...



Gill
Gill Shaw
Editor



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Our promise to you...

Every month we will bring you down-to-earth, practical advice and ideas that are achievable now and relevant to you and your dog.

Cover dog: This month's cover star is Rusha, a Newfoundland. Owner Liz Cole says: "Run free Rusha, enjoy life over the bridge as much as you did your short life on earth 23/6/2015-13/2/2016." Photo by Penelope Malby, www.penelopemalbyphotography.co.uk

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Competition terms & conditions: The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. No cash alternative prize is available. Competition winners are picked at random. Sorry, prizes are restricted to UK entrants only and are not transferable. Dogs Monthly reserves the right to cancel a competition at any stage if, in its opinion, this is deemed necessary, or if circumstances arise outside its control. If third party companies fail to provide prizes, Dogs Monthly will not provide them or be held responsible. Dogs Monthly, its directors, employees or agents will not be held responsible for any injury caused by a product supplied by a third party. Dogs Monthly reserves the right to disqualify any entries that breach these rules. To obtain a list of competition winners, please send a request in writing, with an SAE, at least seven days after the competition closing date.

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K9 Queries

Our FREE service for readers!
Your canine problems solved
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VULNERABLE BREEDS

Corgi's all smiles



Photo © Diane Pearce Collection/The Kennel Club

GOOD NEWS FOR fans of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi and the Old English Sheepdog, which both experienced a surge in popularity in 2015, according to the latest breed registration statistics from the Kennel Club.

In 2014, the Pembroke Welsh Corgi was considered at risk for the first time in the breed's history, with only 274 puppies registered. With registrations in 2015 up 34 per cent it's been moved from the Vulnerable Breeds list to the

At Watch list. Over the same period, Old English Sheepdog registrations rose by 22 per cent to 495, and the breed is no longer on the At Watch list.

Things are not looking so good, however, for the Bedlington Terrier, which has entered the At Watch list for the first time, with only 395 puppy registrations in 2015, or for the English Setter and Irish Terrier, which are now on the Vulnerable Native Breeds list. This includes breeds with fewer than 300 puppy registrations annually, meaning they fall below the minimum number needed to ensure the breed is sustainable.

There are now 29 breeds on the vulnerable list, including the Skye Terrier, Kerry Blue Terrier, Sussex Spaniel and Field Spaniel. The Otterhound remains the most vulnerable of all with only 34 puppies registered in 2015.

Seven breeds, including the Bearded Collie and Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, are on the At Watch list for breeds with 300 to 450 registrations a year.

By contrast, the Labrador Retriever, consistently the most popular dog in the UK, had 32,507 puppies registered in 2015.

KC secretary Caroline Kisko said, "We compile the list to raise awareness of some of our oldest and historically best-loved breeds of dog, which are struggling to compete with newer breeds that are more fashionable.

"Crufts is a great opportunity for people to discover the 216 breeds recognised in the UK. Currently half of all dogs registered are from the top 10 breeds, with lesser-known breeds sadly trailing far behind."

RECYCLING

Keeping Britain tidy

MANY INQUISITIVE dogs pick up litter when out on walks, but ageing Boxer Paris goes one step further – she recycles it! Her owner, Fran Hodges, who's had Paris since she was a pup, says she's always had the habit of picking up litter, without ever being trained to do so.

"She will not give up the object until we reach the bin nearest to our home," Fran says. "Sometimes she keeps hold until we reach our house, then drops it by the garage, which is where our recycling bags are kept!"

Fran has started to chronicle the Boxer's efforts to clean the streets of Bodmin, Cornwall, through a Facebook page called 'Paris's Wombling Page – One dog against the litterbugs'.



When not 'working', Paris loves running on the beach and playing fetch. According to Fran, they do go through an awful lot of tennis balls, but Paris doesn't leave them behind to litter the beach.

"They go home with us!" says Fran.

QUICK ACTION

Hearing problem



DOMINO THE LABRADOR probably thought herself rather clever when she managed to get her paws – and teeth – on her owner's hearing aids, but her mischievousness resulted in a scare for Domino's owner, Norma McKenzie, and a rush to the PDSA's Dundee Pet Hospital.

Norma says six-month-old Domino had tried several times to nip her hearing aids and glasses, but without success. But when she returned home one day to find the Labrador puppy chewing on one of the aids, and the other nowhere to be found, she knew Domino must have swallowed it.

Thankfully, PDSA vets solved the matter quickly, without surgery, when Domino was given some medication to induce vomiting.

"Within five minutes Domino had brought up all the different bits of the hearing aid, along with the battery!" said Norma. "We also discovered she'd swallowed bits from a comb, the jewel from a hairclip, and had even been munching on prawn crackers!"

Domino probably enjoyed the induced vomiting rather less than the munching part of her adventure, but Norma and the vet's quick action prevented any fatal blockage in Domino's digestive system, or any damage to her stomach lining caused by the battery she'd swallowed.

Domino still looks as though butter wouldn't melt, though...

HILIFE TROPHY

Mae's made up!

THE WINNERS of the HiLife 'Best Friends' Trophy 2015, voted for by *Dogs Monthly* readers are Helen Jones and her bonny Border Collie, Mae, from Brecon, Powys. Helen and Mae – who was rescued from a farm, and has since taken to agility like a real pro – were featured in our September 2015 issue.

Says Helen, "I'm absolutely overwhelmed! Thank you so much to everyone who voted for my little Mae! Agility has been the making of her; she has such a big heart and she tries so hard – a typical collie! To think that she was going to be shot because they said she was untrainable..."

"Mae has come such a long way from her horrendous first two years of life and I am so privileged and honoured that fate chose me to be in her life and she in mine."



As well as the engraved HiLife Trophy, Helen wins a six-month supply of HiLife food, which she has generously asked to be donated to Valgrays Border Collie Rescue.

"They are amazing," says Helen. "They do such important work."

In the runner-up spot for the HiLife Trophy were Loretta Salisbury and her Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Willow; in third place were Imogen Woodman and Millie; and fourth came Jenny Deakin with Lily-Rose.

The new series of 'Best friends' is now underway. Turn to page 32 to meet our first nominees for the 2016 HiLife Trophy, and find details of how to enter. You and your dog could become our next 'Best friends' champions!

GUILTY

Vet convicted

VETERINARY SURGEON Gary Samuel and veterinary assistant Rochelle McEwan have been convicted of six offences under the Animal Welfare Act after 22 dogs and eight cats were found living in filth at their vet practice in Armley, Leeds, in February 2015. One cat and four dogs had to be put to sleep.

With the exception of two Chinese Cresteds, all the dogs on the property were husky types, some only puppies. Many of them had been kept in a dark basement, accessible through a trap door covered by a carpet.

RSPCA inspector Nikki Cheetham said, "That's where most of the dogs were found – living in cages in a pitch-black dungeon. It was filthy, there were faeces everywhere, and they had no access to food or water. Most of the cats were shut in one room, which was also covered with excrement."

The charges brought against the pair at Leeds Magistrates Court included causing unnecessary suffering to animals by failing to explore and address the causes of their poor body condition, failing to seek professional veterinary care for their deteriorating physical condition, and failing to meet their needs by not providing a suitable environment. McEwan received a 12-week prison sentence suspended for



12 months and was banned indefinitely from keeping, owning, dealing or transporting animals. Samuel will be sentenced in March.

"The condition of these animals, and the way in which they were being kept was appalling," said Nikki Cheetham. "This situation was made even more shocking when you consider those people responsible are in a position of trust. People who work in the veterinary profession are the first port of call if an animal needs help. It is unthinkable to consider what was going on in this surgery as clients were coming and going, paying their vet fees."

Happily, 21 of the animals – 15 dogs and six cats – have been rehomed.

RARE BREED

Sussex get-together

ARE YOU the proud owner of a Sussex Spaniel, or would you like to meet one? Then you shouldn't miss 'Sussex at the Sussex 2016' – the Sussex

Spaniels' gathering planned for Sunday 19 June at the Sussex Country Show in Parham Park, near Pulborough, West Sussex.

Sheila Appleby, vice president of the Sussex Spaniel Association, says, "When we first went to Parham, we found that many folk



who live in the county of Sussex didn't know there was a breed called the Sussex Spaniel, and that it was originally bred there."

With only 67 puppy registrations with the Kennel Club in 2014, the Sussex Spaniel is on the KC's list of vulnerable native breeds. Sussex Spaniel owners, however, are very dedicated and would love to teach people more about this little-known breed.

"Back in 2010 at the Sussex Country Show we had a record gathering of 73 Sussex Spaniels," says Sheila. "We are inviting all Sussex Spaniel owners to come along this year and see if we can have record numbers to parade in the main arena."

Visit the show's website at www.sussexcountryshow.co.uk or find out more about Sussex Spaniels at www.sussexspaniels.org.uk



BREEDING

Cocker Spaniel testing scheme



THE KENNEL CLUB has approved a new DNA testing scheme for acral mutilation syndrome (AMS) in Cocker Spaniels.

AMS is a hereditary disease that causes lack of pain

sensitivity in the dog's limbs, which often leads to self-mutilation through excessive licking and biting. Dogs can bite down to the bone, severely damaging pads and claws. The symptoms can show as early as three months old.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club secretary, says, "We are pleased to be announcing this new DNA test for Cocker Spaniels, which will help breeders make informed decisions when it comes to breeding, enable potential puppy buyers to be aware of issues which could affect their chosen breed, and ultimately protect and maintain the health of the breed."

The test is offered by Antagene; find out more at www.antagene.com

WHATEVER NEXT...

Marathon dog

WHEN SHE LET her dog Ludivine out of the house for a toilet break, April Hamlin from Elmont, Alabama, USA, didn't expect her usually lazy dog to go very far. Instead, the two-year-old Bloodhound sneaked out of the back garden and somehow managed to join the county's inaugural Trackless Train Trek Half Marathon.

Ludivine's participation caused much hilarity among the runners, and photographers at the event made her the star of several photos snapped at various points on the 13-mile course. Despite getting distracted occasionally, Ludivine completed the course,

apparently coming seventh, for which she received her own medal!

The other participants didn't seem to mind Ludivine stealing the show and a place in the top 10, although one jokingly asked whether she had paid her entry fee.

"That's a Bloodhound for you," said another. "They won't stop until you do. They love to be with people."

There have been suggestions that Ludivine should become the event's official mascot. Even if that doesn't happen, she still made headlines and won a medal – not bad for a dog who only went out for a wee.



Picture © WeRunHuntsville/G Gelmis & J Armstrong

CRIME

Tragedy for Troya

WHEN TROYA, a two-year-old Presa Canario guard dog, went missing from her kennel at her home in Romiley, Stockport, on Christmas Eve, owner Anthony Taylor was devastated. Desperate to find her, he immediately launched a media campaign to track her down.

Heartbreakingly, Troya's body was found in the canal in January. She had a carrier bag tied over her head, and there was a washing line attached to her collar. Her devastated owner can't imagine who could have done such a thing to his dog, but believes the thieves had to have been well prepared, and that Troya must have been drugged before being stolen.

Anthony is offering a £2,000 reward to anyone who may be able to help. More details are at www.facebook.com/groups/446223318906802 and anyone with information about the crime should call the RSPCA on 0300 123 8018.



SNIPPETS

Palm oil danger

DOG OWNERS who walk their dogs on the beach have been warned to be very careful should they encounter lumps of a white, waxy substance that smells like diesel. It's likely to be solidified palm oil, which is harmless to humans, but toxic to dogs. Palm oil is often dumped at sea, and then carried ashore in bad weather. The latest sightings have been on beaches on the Hampshire and Dorset coasts.



Mudlarks!

IF YOU'D LIKE to exercise, raise money for Battersea Dogs & Cats Home and don't mind getting muddy with your dog, then consider taking part in the charity's Muddy Dog Challenge – the UK's only mud run where owners can tackle an obstacle course, and run alongside their four-legged friend.

There are two events: the first on Saturday 7 May 2016 and the second on Saturday 21 May. For more information and to register, visit www.battersea.org.uk/muddydog



PDSA miracle

HOLLY, A YOUNG Border Collie from Leicester, was given only a 10 per cent chance of survival when she was rushed to the city's PDSA hospital by her worried owners. She had the most severe case of septic peritonitis PDSA senior vet Elly Hopkins had ever seen at the clinic, but after three life-saving operations, she has defied all odds and made a full recovery.

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To the future

An artist's impression of the finished veterinary hospital.

In response to an increasing number of pets being surrendered to rescue centres because their owners can't afford the vet bills, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home is opening a new veterinary hospital. **Victoria Heywood** went along to find out more...

If you happen to pass Battersea Dogs & Cats Home's London centre in the next few months, you may notice that it is something of a building site. This narrow strip of land wedged between the

railway bridges is expanding its buildings the only way it can – upward. Being hemmed in by three major train lines and a main road is no obstacle; this summer, Battersea will unveil a new medical centre to help

cope with the growing number of pets coming through its doors that require immediate veterinary help.

Vets are often a forgotten part of the rehoming process in large centres, but they

are vital, and work tirelessly behind the scenes. One of the most common reasons for people surrendering their pets is because they cannot afford to treat medical conditions, so Battersea's dedicated vets and nurses are the first port of call for many of the dogs and cats coming through these doors. The charity's commitment to reducing the unwanted pet population also entails a huge amount of routine neutering

Bluebell the Staffie soon after the veterinary team successfully treated her chronic ear problems.



Meggie the crossbreed puppy was quickly snapped up by a family.



and spaying. Altogether, this means that Battersea vets perform around 19 operations every single day!

Battersea's head vet, Shaun Opperman, said, "A new and improved vet hospital will make a huge difference to the level of care our clinic team are able to give. At the moment, we have a team of 35 vets and vet nurses working in a confined space and the new facilities will allow us to increase the procedures we perform and provide more care to our patients."

"Now, more than ever, we're seeing more complicated cases and neglected animals coming in, where people can't afford treatment."

ESSENTIAL TREATMENT

It's dogs like Bluebell that have nowhere else to turn when owners' funds run short. The five-year-old Staffordshire Bull Terrier desperately needed treatment for chronic infections when she arrived at Battersea. In a huge amount of pain, Bluebell's ears were bleeding and sore, and her owners simply could not afford the reconstructive surgery she needed. Battersea's vet team operated on Bluebell, and she soon found a lovely new home in Kent.

Magic's last hope was Battersea's veterinary team, too. After spending her first few days at the centre urinating in her bedding, it was discovered that the Miniature Schnauzer had two large bladder stones, which, on removal, were found to be the largest the attending veterinary surgeon had ever seen. Magic now lives free from pain with an adoring new family in south London.

With the new veterinary hospital, it is hoped that more cases like Bluebell's and Magic's can be treated.

Not only does the new space incorporate three operating theatres (the site is currently coping with just one), there is a supporting laboratory and X-ray suite to speed up diagnosis. It is hoped that this will give the capacity for over 100 procedures a week. There will also be a dedicated dental suite, as tooth problems are by far the commonest issue among Battersea's intake.



An artist's impression of the double operating theatre.



The clinic hub.

Rescue & welfare

Spacious, soundproof recuperation wards will be used to minimise stress in the patients, hopefully keeping recovery times to a minimum. All in all, this should contribute to shorter waiting lists for pet patients, and shorter waits for homes!

Altogether, this project will cost an estimated £2.4 million – so if you can contribute, visit www.battersea.org.uk/vethospitalappeal

COMBATTING STRESS

For the very first time in Battersea's history, more cats are being rehomed than dogs. This is put down to the fact that cats fit in more easily with our increasingly busy lifestyles and smaller homes, being a more adaptable and independent pet. But it may be to do with Battersea's success in housing its rescue cats.

The cattery incorporates ingenious ways of reducing stress among the residents: the cats cannot see each other, have plenty of spaces to hide, and are visited regularly by understanding and gentle volunteers. All of this makes for happy, well-balanced cats. Numerous pink and blue cat stickers line the walls of the cattery – each indicating a

An artist's impression of the new X-ray room.



successful rehoming by the team.

In an effort to address this imbalance, the rehoming practices for the dogs have had a shake-up. Lining the kennel walls are signs explaining to visitors about why there are fewer dogs on display; a rotation system between the kennels is now enforced, whereby dogs get to have extended breaks from public viewings, particularly if their behaviour is a cause for concern, or they are showing signs of stress.

Battersea is introducing a new policy of 'siestas'. This is when the viewing kennels are closed for one hour with the lights off, to give the dogs time to themselves to settle before allowing the public to see them again

Even for dogs that are happy to interact with the public all day, Battersea is introducing a new policy of 'siestas'. This is

when the viewing kennels are closed for one hour with the lights off, to give the dogs time to themselves to settle before allowing the public to see them again. This should hopefully help to keep the dogs calm and rested, so they present themselves in the best possible light to potential new families, maximising their chances of being picked.

Battersea's ultra-modern cattery at the London site.



'POG DOGS'

What other exciting developments are in store for Battersea this year? Will there be a new series of *Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs* in 2016? We are pleased to say it's a very likely 'yes'! In fact, when *Dogs Monthly* toured Battersea's London site at the end of last year, the man himself had just been filming for the 2015 Christmas special.

Reflecting on last year's series, the show has definitely started addressing more serious issues, particularly in covering the euthanasia of Bert, the Great Dane puppy with untreatable joint dysplasia.

Press officer Ruth Marsden



Staffie puppy Scarlett being looked over by Battersea vet nurse Lauren.

explains, "It was certainly an interesting year. We showed that we lost a dog, which was incredibly sad, but this really gives the reality that we face here every day. It isn't just happy endings.

"We have animals that come in covered in fleas and mange and scabs, and it is good to show this

sometimes, just to be able to say, 'Look what is going on.'"

Battersea is proud to say that no medical condition, however costly, will ever make its staff turn away a pet in need, and with the new veterinary hospital, a vital lifeline can be offered to more poorly dogs and cats in 2016. ●

Kennels can be a worrying environment, but Battersea hopes that new calming routines will help to keep stress among the dogs to a minimum.



Four-year-old Miko was at Battersea for six months before her forever home was found. A retired racing Greyhound and black in colour, she ticked a lot of 'difficult to rehome' boxes, despite being friendly, cheerful and perfectly behaved.

Fire service dogs ①

Hot dogs



Millie is deployed to help a neighbouring fire service.

Dogs are playing a major part in the fight against arson, as **Debbie Bridges** discovered when she went to meet three talented canine detectives

Although it's over 100 years since the effectiveness of dogs working alongside police officers was recognised in the UK, their use in other public services is a relatively recent innovation.

The Fire Service is now



Saxon and Inca.

enlisting canine help in two distinct disciplines where dogs' amazing scenting abilities have proved invaluable. Urban Search and Rescue dogs look for missing people, from lost walkers to earthquake survivors, while Fire Investigation (FI) dogs are trained to sniff out clues in the aftermath of fires that may have been started deliberately.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) is proud to have dogs operating in both these specialist fields. On the first of two visits to HFRS headquarters, I'm looking

Andy Earl with Millie (left) and Sean White with Ruby and Harvey.



forward to meeting their FI dogs and getting the lowdown on exactly how their noses can assist in the fight against arson.

It's only 20 years since FI dogs went operational in the UK, following the successful

use of dogs in America. The Hampshire service's first four-legged worker, a black Labrador called Saxon, joined the team in 2006. His worth soon became apparent and he was joined two years later by

another Lab, Inca. By the time Saxon and Inca retired, they'd played a major role in the retrieval of vital evidence, time and again, and there was no doubting the value of the dogs' input.

Currently, there are just 17 qualified FI dogs in the entire country. They're spread across a network of fire services, ensuring a dog can be made available anywhere, at any time. Three of these dogs are based in Hampshire which, according to the Chief Fire Officers Association, has the best Arson Task Force in the country.

"We're leading from the front," fire investigation officer and dog handler Andy Earl tells me. "And having dogs on the team definitely helps give us the edge."

VITAL EVIDENCE

Andy and his colleague Sean White manage Hampshire's FI dogs – Andy working alongside Millie, a Sprocker (Springer Spaniel-Cocker Spaniel cross) who was gifted to HFRS in 2012, and Sean partnering his own two rehomed dogs, Border Collie Harvey and Springer Spaniel Ruby. Between them, they cover the south east of England, travelling outside the region if their skills are needed further afield.

"Driving a couple of hours each way for a job that can take minutes might seem odd," says Andy, "but it makes sense when you consider the amount of time saved by officers investigating a fire, which far outweighs travel costs. Dogs can search an area for essential traces of ignitable liquids in a matter of minutes, and pinpoint the exact spot where they were used. It could take officers a day or two to cover the same area."

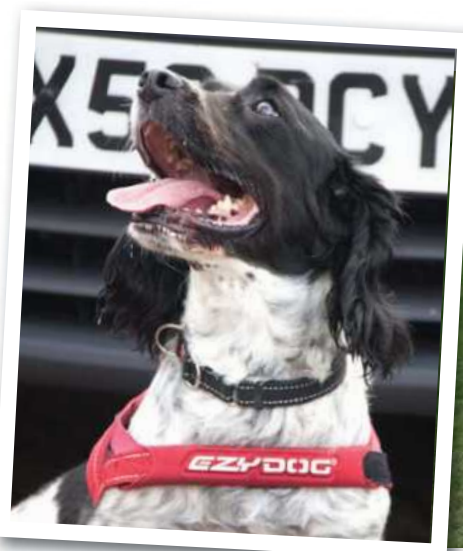
And we're not just talking about time and manpower; money spent on laboratory

testing is also drastically reduced, as Andy explains. "Samples of whatever's been used to start a fire are needed for forensic analysis, and while we might be able to detect, say, a whiff of petrol, we'd struggle to locate the source of the smell accurately, so we end up taking samples in a number of places. The dogs tell us precisely where to take a sample, and as each one costs hundreds of pounds to analyse, the savings are significant."

These samples are a key part of the process of linking a suspect to the crime scene, but the dogs will also locate any objects that have come into contact with ignitable liquids and may have been dropped in the vicinity.

"Millie recently found a petrol can, which had been chucked over a neighbouring garden fence following an arson attack," Andy tells me. "That discovery formed part of the evidence produced in court to successfully convict two offenders."

Arson is an extremely serious crime, with lengthy prison sentences meted out, and the dogs' reliability is often called into question by the defence. Although FI dogs are tested and relicensed annually, training is ongoing and handlers keep detailed records of their practice sessions, which



Andy sends Millie off.



Andy keeps a close eye on Millie's progress.



Harvey locates a mobile phone in a hole.



Harvey enjoys his reward for a job well done.

Dogs can search an area for essential traces of ignitable liquids in a matter of minutes, and pinpoint the exact spot where they were used



Millie, Harvey and Ruby.

can then be presented in court to back up their credibility.

ESSENTIAL TRAINING

With no suspicious fire scenes demanding the three FI dogs' attention on this particular morning, we're planning to notch up a couple of sessions to add to their training records, which will give me the chance to watch the doggy sleuths in action.

We make our way to the spacious kennels where the dogs relax during any downtime when they're on duty. Out of hours, they're much-loved pets, with a range of interests from kayaking to indulging their inner couch potatoes with the family – in Millie's case, Andy, his wife Julie, two children, a brace of Standard Poodles and four cats!



Millie at home with Sean's children Sarah and James, and poodles Frost and Poppy.

Taking it in turns again, the dogs are a whirlwind of activity as they put their noses to the ground and rush purposefully to and fro

As Millie, Ruby and Harvey bounce exuberantly around us, Andy talks me through the first exercise. One at a time, the dogs will search three storeys of an unoccupied training building for several cotton buds, each smeared with a single drop of lighter fluid – one of the eight ignitable liquids they are capable of detecting.

The dogs are trained to indicate 'finds' by stopping and staring at the relevant place, but the close bond

between dog and handler can result in more subtle means of communication.

"I always know when Harvey's on to something," says Sean. "His tail stops wagging from side to side and starts going round and round!"

LIVE TO WORK

The dogs' bouncing ratchets up a gear when they catch sight of their harnesses, and it looks as if the toughest challenge of the day will be getting the threesome to stand still long enough to clip them on! Clearly, the prospect of going to work is about as good as it gets which, Andy says, can cause a bit of disruption when his pager goes off in the middle of the night. "Millie gets really excited when she hears the pager, and by the time I get downstairs, she's wound everyone up!"

The harnesses are fitted with blue flashing lights – a detail that's always a hit with the kids on school visits – and each dog



Millie modelling at Crufts.

has a set of protective boots.

"The boots aren't for protection against the fire as it'll be completely out by the time the dogs arrive on the scene," says Sean. "We never send the dogs into dangerous situations, but if we think there could be things like nails or glass among the debris, they'll wear the boots as a precaution."

The exercise is a walkover, which bodes well for Millie and Ruby who are taking their annual relicensing tests in a few days' time. They all work quickly, and when Harvey

decides Sean is rather slow to react to his determined 'stop'n'stare' routine, he throws in some Collie-style barking to hurry things along. To the dogs, it's all one big game and the best bit comes right at the end – the ever-popular tennis ball!

"We don't reward until after the last find," says Andy. "In a real-life situation, we set up a final find well away from the fire where it's safe to fling a ball around."

LOST PROPERTY

There's more excitement when we load the dogs into their specially equipped, air-conditioned vans and head out to open ground for the next exercise which focuses on finding the sort of items someone might lose or discard as they hastily leave the scene of their crime. Our suspect was pretty careless, having lost a shoe, dropped his mobile phone and thrown away a disposable plastic glove – all of which bear minute traces of lighter fluid.

"A suspect wouldn't have to actually spill any fluid for the dogs to pick up the scent," Sean explains. "Their sense of smell is so strong, they'll find anything that has come into

contact with the container."

Taking it in turns again, the dogs are a whirlwind of activity as they put their noses to the ground and rush purposefully to and fro. Their tails wag continuously – and, in Harvey's case, occasionally go round and round!

With minimal input from Andy and Sean, who point them towards areas they haven't covered, all three move from one find to the next with no trouble.

By the time the last item has been run to ground, the sky is darkening and it's time we were thinking about heading for home – but not before the dogs have enjoyed a well-earned playtime in the form of 20 minutes' general mayhem with a couple of tennis ball launchers.

Watching the dogs relishing life's simple pleasures, it makes me smile to think they're sometimes described as just another tool in an Arson Task Force officer's kit. They're so much more than that – and not just to their devoted handlers and families, judging by the thousands who follow them on Twitter. Their appeal to the dog-loving British public is yet another spin-off of having dogs

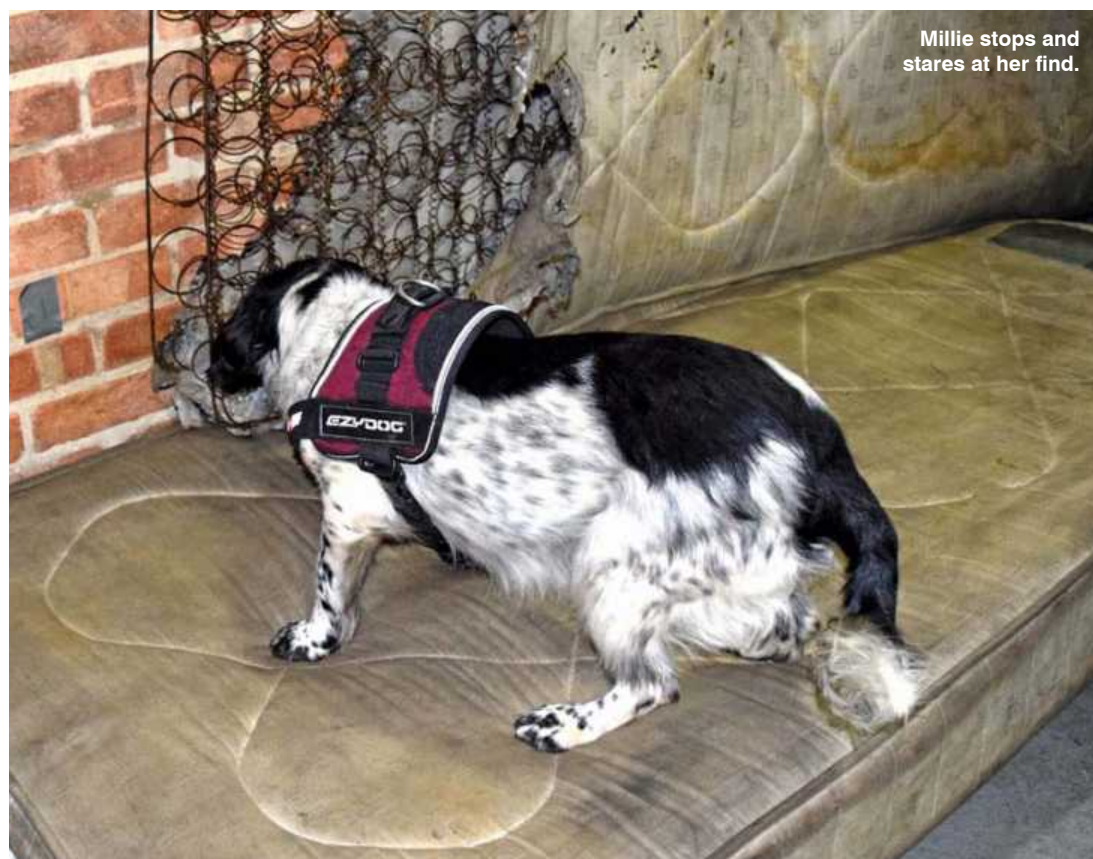


Millie at the scene of a fire.

on board and beside us in our working lives.

"We often take them along to fundraising or safety events

because they get everyone's attention," Andy laughs. "No one's interested in us – it's the dogs who are the stars!" ●



Millie stops and stares at her find.

Next Month

Meet Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service's intrepid Urban Search and Rescue Dogs – oh, and their handlers!

Find out more

Follow Millie, Ruby and Harvey on Twitter @ HantsFireDogs or watch them on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/HampshireFireService>

About the author



Debbie Bridges is a freelance writer. She recently relocated to Devon where she plans to spend her free time exploring every inch of the countryside in the company of her Romanian rescue dog Ula.

The greatest *dog* show on earth!

Crufts is about much, much more than the Best in Show. Here's a round-up of some of the other amazing finalists in the spotlight as Crufts celebrates its 125th birthday



Crufts 2016
NEC
Birmingham
10-13 March
2016



Friends for Life: true heroes

For everyone who loves and appreciates what dogs can do for us and what we can do for them, Eukanuba Friends for Life is Crufts' alternative jewel in the crown. This inspiring competition celebrates heartwarming stories of friendship in adversity, and how humans and dogs transform and enrich each other's lives. It culminates on the Sunday night, just ahead of the Best in Show.

To vote for one of this year's fab four finalists text AZ, BOO, SCOOBY or TEDDY to 82727. Each text costs £1 plus the standard network rate. Voting closes at 2pm on Sunday 13 March, and all profits from votes go to the Kennel Club Charitable Trust.

When: Sunday, around 5.35pm

Where: Main arena



Azerley & Cohen Hadfield

Seven-year-old Cohen has an autism spectrum condition, global developmental delay, hearing impairment and epilepsy. At around 18 months old he totally shut down, and was unable to make eye contact. He began to have frequent meltdowns, and noises and people caused him great anxiety.

Autism assistance dog Azerley began working with Cohen last September, and the impact has been far beyond expectation. On the day Azerley arrived, Cohen became instantly calmer.

Azerley is the key to helping Cohen integrate. No longer in his own little world, he has started to make eye contact and interact with his surroundings. With Azerley by his side, Cohen has grown in confidence, and his language has improved so much, he can now sing.



Boo & Rosie Reid

In 2010, Rosie lost her first baby due to complications during the pregnancy that were sadly missed. She's now unable to have children and has been left with an incurable condition that causes regular internal bleeding. She also has chronic fatigue syndrome, and the impact of this resulted in her developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Feeling an unbearable urge to mother, Rosie took on puppy Boo. The two of them were joined at the hip from day one, and when Rosie is about to suffer a PTSD attack, Boo will alert her.

Boo was born with a degenerative heart condition and recently suffered heart failure; Rosie was told she wouldn't survive the night. Thankfully, Boo improved, though it could happen again at any time. Rosie says she will never be a mum, but has everything she could want and more in Boo.



Scooby & Sophie Pearman

Sophie was born with a bleed on her brain and spina bifida, and her family were told she might not survive. She's had seven major brain operations and spent much of her life in hospital.

She also has type 1 diabetes, and no awareness of when her

blood sugars go low. When Scooby came along at eight weeks, he began to naturally pick up on Sophie's low and high sugars, and has twice alerted the family during the night when her sugars have been dangerously low, resulting in her being rushed to hospital and saving her from a diabetic coma.

Sophie and Scooby go everywhere together, including training classes where Sophie has proved to be a natural handler. In Scooby she has everything she needs: a life-saving best friend, love and companionship.



Teddy Bear & Louise Jacobs

Teddy Bear has changed Louise's life dramatically. She suffered with depression for many years after being bullied at school, and being hit by a car when she was 14. The accident meant she has problems with her spine and hips, and sometimes struggles with day-to-day tasks.

Louise has trained Teddy to help her with these tasks to regain her independence. He's not only improved her health and mental health, but also enabled her to have a social life.

regularly attend dog shows, where they've made great friends, and the pair are enthusiastic fundraisers for various charities, to date raising more than £8,000 through holding fun dog shows, sponsored walks, and online photo competitions.

Louise hopes that one day, with Teddy's help, she will be rid of antidepressants for good.

Vulnerable breeds compete!

English Setter.



Don't miss the inaugural final of the Kennel Club's new Vulnerable Breeds competition at Crufts 2016. Sponsored by Eukanuba, it aims to raise awareness of vulnerable British and Irish breeds, and recognise the owners and breeders who are dedicated to their survival and prosperity.

Over the last year, dogs have been competing at Open and Championship shows to collect the highest number of points for their breed. The top-scoring dogs from each of 26 vulnerable native breeds have been invited to take part in this year's final.

When: Friday, around 6.10pm

Where: Main arena



Irish Terrier.

Crufts 2016 statistics

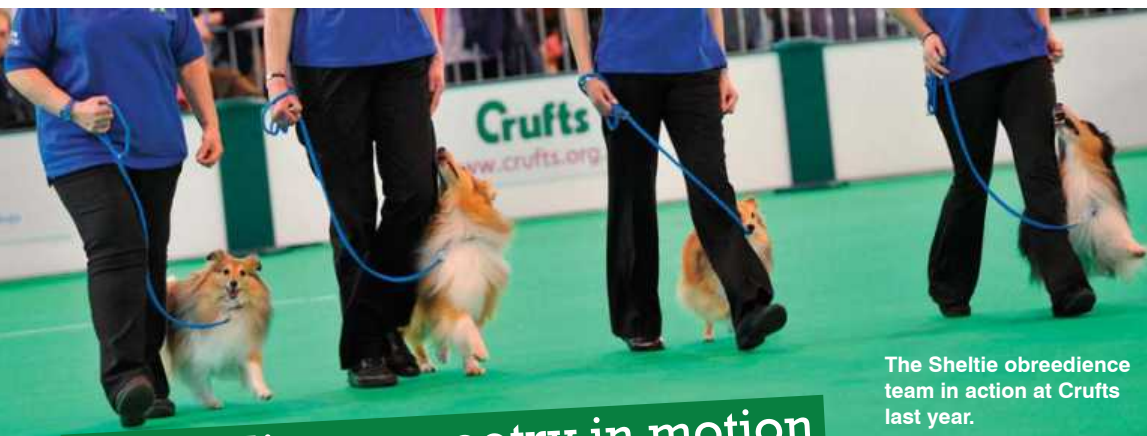
- This year 21,919 dogs have been entered in breed classes, gamekeeper classes, obedience and agility championships – the highest number since 2010.

- 3,396 dogs from overseas will be competing – up 14 per cent on last year.

- Dogs from 47 overseas countries will be taking part including, for the first time, entrants from Venezuela, Peru and the Philippines.

- In each of the breed groups, the highest number of breed entries are:

Toy group:	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.....	322
Utility group:	Bulldog.....	245
Gundog group:	Labrador Retriever.....	588
Working group:	Boxer.....	236
Pastoral group:	Border Collie.....	359
Terrier group:	Staffordshire Bull Terrier	410
Hound group:	Whippet	397



Pic © The Kennel Club

The Sheltie obereidience team in action at Crufts last year.

Obereidience: poetry in motion

No longer just an incredible and beautifully choreographed display, obereidience is now a fully fledged competition. This year's first full contest will see 10 different breed teams – including Samoyeds, Greyhounds, English Springer Spaniels and Pyrenean Sheepdogs – striving to show off their superior obedience skills in an exciting battle of the breeds.

Four heats were held during 2015 and the 10 finalists were chosen by the Kennel Club based on their accuracy, teamwork, presentation, timekeeping and the 'wow factor' of their obedience skills.

When: Saturday, after the bitches' obedience championship

Where: Obedience ring, hall 5

New breeds on the block

Want to see breeds you've never seen before? Well, with 216 breeds now officially recognised by the Kennel Club, Crufts is the place to be!

The Cirneco Dell'Etna (Hound group) and the Lagotto Romagnolo (Gundog group) will have their own classes for the first time this year, while the Azawakh, Hungarian Pumi and Picardy Sheepdog are eligible to compete if qualified in the Any Variety Imported Register classes.

When: Gundog group Friday; Hound group Sunday

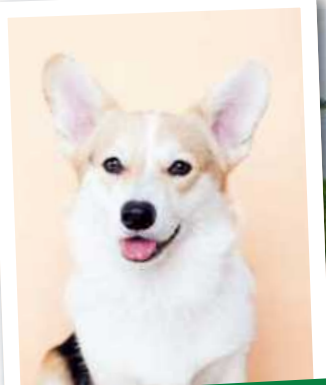
In the show ring

- **Thursday 10 March:** Toy & Utility groups
- **Friday 11 March:** Gundog group
- **Saturday 12 March:** Working & Pastoral groups
- **Sunday 13 March:** Terrier & Hound groups, Best in Show.



Lagotto Romagnolo.

Pic © Nick Ridley/The Kennel Club



Share your pictures of Noodle and Winston!

Instagram stars!

Instagram's most popular canine personalities are going to be at Crufts this year to help raise funds for the

Kennel Club Charitable Trust, so come along and meet Bruno (@brunotheinidachshund), Ramsey (@bluestaffy),

Winston (@winnythecorgi), Elle (@grrlgenius_), Mika (@huskymika) and Noodle (@noodlethedachshund).

You can have your photo taken with them (courtesy of Zevenmedia), or make use of the dog-themed props to take your own pictures with the amazing bunch to raise funds for the KCCT. Share your pictures on social media by using #Crufts125, #Crufts and #KCCT – the funniest pictures will be shared and retweeted throughout the show.

When: Thursday to Sunday

Where: Kennel Club Charitable Trust stand, hall 3, stand 61 ●

Scruffts: amazing 'everydogs'



Olivia and Roxy at Discover Dogs in October.

This year's ever-popular Scruffts Family Crossbreed Dog of the Year contest will be judged by writer Jilly Cooper. The six contenders for the crown, who won their semi-final classes at Discover Dogs, are:

- **Most Handsome Dog:** Hugo, owned by Karen Kalaway from Market Harborough, Leicestershire
- **Prettiest Bitch:** Beau, owned by Diane Taylor from Ramsgate, Kent
- **Good Citizen Dog Scheme:** Fergus, owned by Kathryn Hoffman from Burgh Le Marsh, Lincolnshire
- **Golden Oldie:** Ikey, owned by Val Phillips from Croydon, Surrey
- **Child's Best Friend:** Roxy, owned by Olivia Lawrence from Chesterfield, Derbyshire
- **Best Rescue:** Bella, owned by Helen Lewis from Guildford, Surrey

When: Saturday, around 6.15pm

Where: Main arena



Karen and Hugo won 'Most Handsome Dog'.

Pics © The Kennel Club Picture Library



**Sun, rain or snow...
Oscar is walked
every day of the year**

**But what if the unexpected
happened, and he lost his way
or got spooked and ran off?**

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How the Tracer® Advance microchip system works



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Registration
Register your details
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Lost
Notify all local vet
practices and Petlog



Rescued
Professionals* scan
rescued animals
to find their unique
microchip numbers



Identified
The Petlog database
will match your pet's
unique microchip number
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Reunited
Petlog will contact
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A close-up photograph of a small, scruffy white dog, possibly a Maltese, lying down. A person wearing a white lab coat is using a handheld microchip scanner on the dog's back. The dog's face is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing a warm, orange-toned light.

Health & welfare

Dogs & the law

Count on chips

Mandatory microchipping comes into force in April. We talked to vets, charities and microchipping databases to get the lowdown on the new legislation

On 6 April, the Microchipping of Dogs Regulations 2015 becomes law. The aim of the new legislation is to encourage responsible dog ownership, and also help increase the chance of reuniting owners with their missing pets.

Lost and stray dogs cost charities and the government millions of pounds every year, and put a heavy strain on shelters and local authorities – not to mention the immense heartache caused to owners when a pet goes missing.

Under the new legislation, every dog owner in England, Wales and Scotland must microchip their pet and register them to an approved database before 6 April 2016. (Compulsory microchipping came into force in Northern Ireland in April 2012.)

Local authorities, police constables, community support officers and any other person authorised by the Secretary of State will enforce the regulations. Anyone breaching the law could be issued with a 21-day notice, followed by a £500 fine. The new legislation only applies to dogs over the age of eight weeks, and puppies must be microchipped before they go to their new homes. This means that the breeder should always be the first registered keeper of the puppy and must pass on the matching paperwork to the new owner.

GETTING CHIPPED

A microchip is a small electronic chip, around the size of a grain of rice, which is implanted under the dog's skin. It contains a unique number, which can be read by a scanner, and the owner's contact details relating to this number are logged on a central database.

Some owners may be concerned about the size of the microchip, especially if they own a small breed, such as a Chihuahua, but according to UK microchipping database PetLog there is a mini microchip available that can be implanted with a smaller needle. Alternatively, if you speak to your vet they may suggest waiting a bit longer, and provide you with

an exemption certificate in the meantime.

Dogs can be exempt from microchipping for health reasons. However, if a breeder says a puppy is exempt, make sure they can prove it by producing the vet's certificate.

Before the new legislation there was no national standard for microchip implantation, but all chipping should be carried out by a vet, vet nurse, or a qualified implanter trained under the government-approved LANTRA Awards Level 3 Award in Performing Microchip Implantation Animals (QCF). A person who received training prior to 2016 is

exempt, but does need to provide proof of training.

The six approved microchip databases in the UK are PetLog, Anibase, PetIdentity UK, Pet Protect, Pettrac and SmartChip.

If you travel abroad, check with the implanter or database that these will be recognised in the country you're travelling to.

Some other databases are part of the European Pet Network (EPN), a network of 32 databases who work together across Europe.

UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

It is the responsibility of the registered keeper of a pet to keep their details up to date,

Lost and stray dogs cost charities and the government millions of pounds every year – not to mention the immense heartache caused to owners when a pet goes missing



Chips for free

Microchipping can cost £10 to £15 at the vet's, but some charities – including Blue Cross, Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, among others – are carrying out free microchipping by appointment at their rehoming centres, or at their drop-in

responsible ownership and microchipping events.

● For details of upcoming Battersea events visit <http://tinyurl.com/hfmnz2>

● For Dogs Trust events see www.chipmydog.org.uk/have-your-dog-chipped-for-free

Heath & welfare

but despite this many owners forget to change their contact details when they move house, or pass the dog on to a new owner. In 2013 the UK Dog Warden Association estimated that around 40 per cent of lost dogs with microchips had incorrect or incomplete details.

You can sometimes check online if your details are correct on your microchip's database, but most databases will charge a fee, which ranges between £6 and £16.95, to update details. Some offer the option to upgrade to unlimited changes, which may be useful if you move house a lot, for example.

OWNERS & KEEPERS

Although microchipping dramatically improves the chances of you being reunited with your dog should he go missing, unfortunately scanning of a lost dog (by a local authority, vet and so on) is

Reporting problems

From 24 February 2015 anyone who finds a problem with an implanted chip – for example, it doesn't scan, has moved from where it was implanted, or causes an abnormal reaction – must report it to the microchip adverse event reporting scheme run by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

In the Veterinary Pharmacovigilance UK Annual Review 2014, there were eight adverse reaction reports related to microchips. However, all were implanted at the same time as one or more vaccines were administered, and there were no clear cases that attributed the reaction to just being chipped.

Gudrun Ravetz, junior vice president of the British Veterinary Association, says, "In my 13 years as a practising vet I have never seen a

long-term clinical problem associated with a microchip. I have seen one chip in a dog that had migrated, and one non-responder; however, I have dealt with countless heartbroken clients who have lost their pet as a result of it not being microchipped.

"If implanted properly at your veterinary practice, and checked during your pets' regular veterinary check-ups, I believe microchips can save lives and can certainly save emotional heartache. My dogs have always been microchipped and always will be."

Anyone can report an adverse reaction. These should be reported through the online VMD microchip adverse event reporting form at <http://tinyurl.com/hsnp37e>

Please seek advice from your vet if you do see a problem with a microchip.

currently not mandatory, so there's always a possibility a dog won't be scanned. If your dog is rehomed legally, the new owners are under no

obligation to return the pet to you.

A microchip is not proof of ownership, and the person the microchip is registered to

is known as the 'keeper'. The keeper will still be liable if a dog strays, bites someone or causes unjust damage, even if they no longer have the dog. ●

A dog called Mog

When buying or adopting a rescue puppy or adult dog, always ask your vet to scan them on your first visit to make sure the chip and paperwork corresponds.

In February this year Dogs Trust staff were left dumbfounded when a homeless Greyhound was brought into their Kenilworth branch. The Greyhound was scanned to see if they could locate his owners quickly, but although a chip was found, the records didn't quite match, and the one-year-old Greyhound – now called Mog – was apparently a cat!

Helen Barlow, Dogs Trust Kenilworth supporter relations officer, explains, "Dogs Trust routinely check the microchip of every dog which comes to us in case we are able to reunite them with their owners – the details are often not up to date, but this is definitely the first time a dog has been identified as a cat. It must have been a mix-up at the vets when he was originally microchipped.

"We hope Mog's story will

remind people to keep their details up to date as, sadly, we've seen hundreds of dogs which have ended up at Dogs Trust because they have become

separated from their owners.

"In 2015 alone Dogs Trust microchipped over 185,000 dogs for free across our network of rehoming

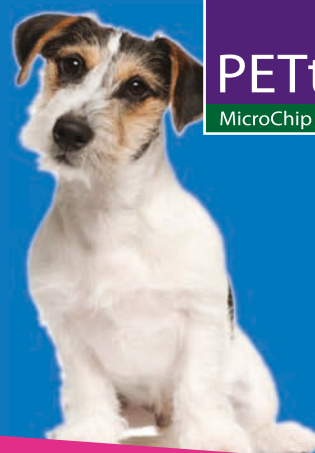
centres. We're still working tirelessly to ensure even more dogs are given these small but essential pieces of technology before April."



Are your pet's MicroChip details up to date?

Take two minutes to update your details with the relevant database.

Not sure which database to contact? Enter your pet's MicroChip number at **www.pettrac.co.uk**



Are you a MicroChip Implanter?

AVID has been supplying pet MicroChips and scanners in the UK for over 20 years.

We've just launched our new & enhanced registration website with features to help breeders automatically comply with the new compulsory microchipping legislation in 2016.

For more information about the forthcoming changes in the law or buying our MicroChips please visit www.avidplc.com or call us on 0800 652 7 977



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Dig deep!

The Big Build

Can you help support a wonderful Dorset charity that gives a permanent home to 'last chance' dogs and other animals?

The Birkett-Smith Animal Sanctuary in Dorset, which provides a last hope for hard-to-home dogs, is about to get an essential makeover as part of its Big Build project. The aim is to get all its dogs undercover in soundproof and weatherproof facilities this year. Work is due to begin in June and the sanctuary needs donations and the help of volunteers to make it happen.

PERMANENT HOME

Joy Keys founded The Birkett-Smith Animal Sanctuary just a few years ago on her smallholding in Bridport, Dorset. In 2014, it gained charity status and now provides a permanent home for 150 domestic, farm and wild animals, including cats, more than 80 dogs, pigs, horses, sheep, and birds from emus to a seagull. All of the animals at the sanctuary either have disabilities, behavioural issues (such as aggression or a fear of humans), or are at an

age where there's little chance of them being rehomed. Most importantly, the shelter operates a no-kill policy, making it a lifeline for those animals who would otherwise be euthanased.

The canine residents include an assortment of bull breeds, and ex-fighting and 'bait dogs' from the UK, together with Romanian strays nicknamed the 'Rommies'. Thanks to the sanctuary's intervention, these dogs have the opportunity to be rehabilitated and possibly rehomed or, failing that, to remain at the sanctuary.

In the case of those overseas dogs for whom the sanctuary will become their forever home, Joy and her small team of dedicated volunteers spend a lot of time carefully matching them up with a suitable 'pack' at the Birkett-Smith sanctuary by speaking to the European shelters, watching footage of the dog's behaviour and reading the rescue's assessment before the dogs travel. Most of these dogs then go on to live in

The play area is now out of use due to poor conditions.



Currently, all 12 spaces in the Haven are full, and there's a waiting list, but Joy hopes to build eight more safe haven spaces and improve their current facilities

their allocated packs, spread out over an acre.

In the past year, however, the sanctuary has taken in over 25 more dogs who are not suited to living in a domestic household, and, due to a lack of manpower, space and funding, Joy has recently had to announce reluctantly that they can't take on any more dogs needing these 'forever spaces' in 2016.

DOGS SOS

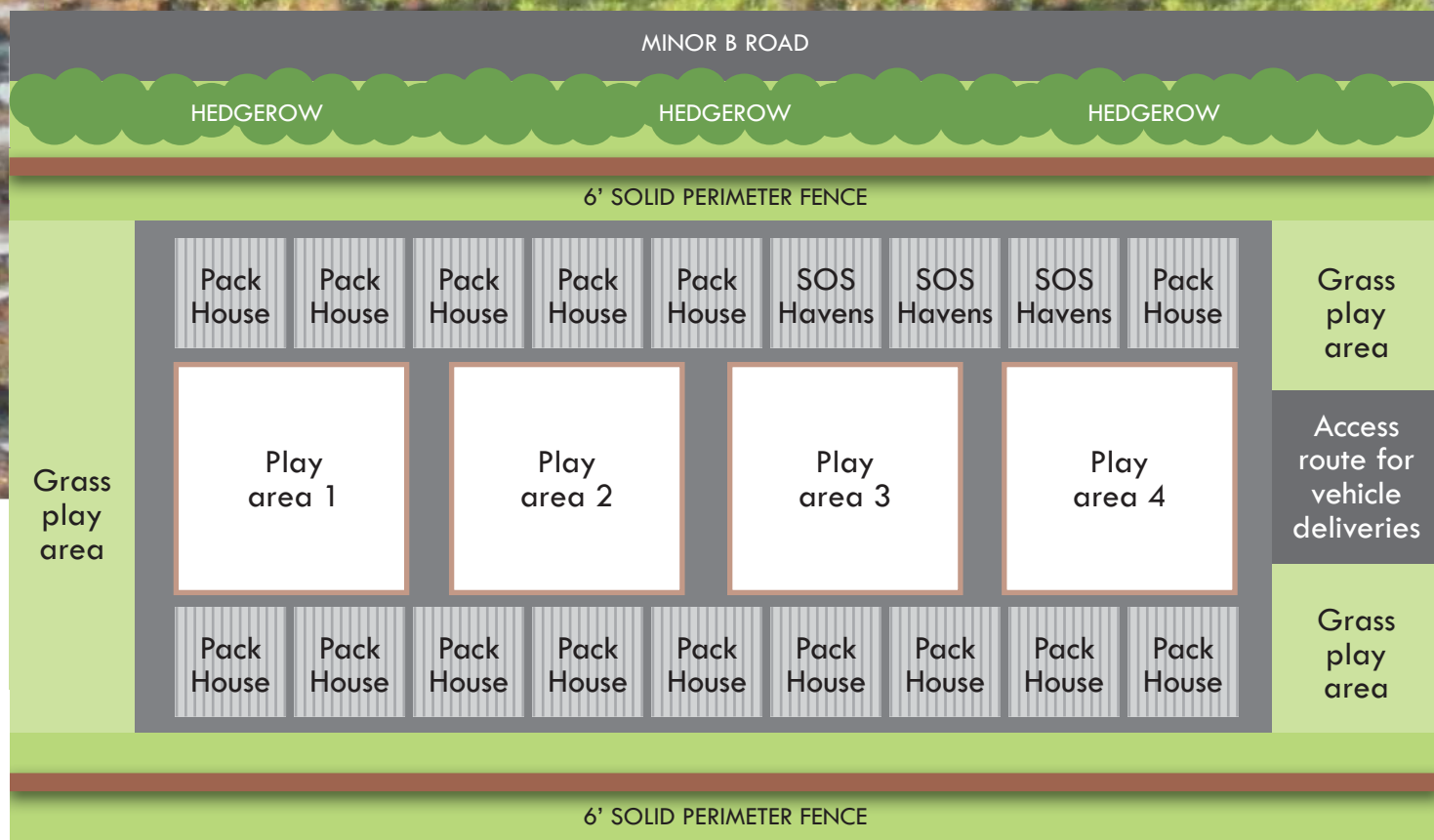
For those animals that need specialised care and more time to rehabilitate, the sanctuary last year set up the SOS Haven. The Haven provides an opportunity for Joy and her team to try to turn around dog-aggressive and/or human-aggressive dogs to give them the best chance of being rehomed in future.

These dogs are often owned by other rescues that turn to the SOS Haven for help and fund the dog's stay and treatment. SOS Haven also helps non-funded local authority pound dogs – nicknamed the 'Pocket Money Gang' – who rely on donations for their care.

Currently, all 12 spaces in the Haven are full, and there's a waiting list, but Joy hopes to build eight more safe haven spaces and improve their current facilities. The waiting list shows there's a vital need for a shelter like SOS Haven.

Says Joy, "The sheer number of requests we have received for SOS spaces in such a short time is a sad testament to the overbreeding/throwaway attitude and abuse towards animals that has become more prevalent in the UK. The need for these spaces is more





apparent than ever.

"We take in a mixture of human- and dog-reactive dogs that no one else could take and we want to upgrade our facilities to match our growth."

PLANS AFOOT

The first plans show a concreted area of 240ft x 45ft to include four all-weather play areas with solid-wood fencing; 15 spacious, non-segregated 20ft x 10ft pack houses that can hold two to five dogs per house; and three segregated SOS Haven buildings. They will need about 200 mixer-lorries' worth of concrete to fill in the half-acre plot, which is

currently an open field.

Says Joy, "The dogs live in packs in hamlet-style housing outside which, as you can imagine, gets very wet, but it is more like a village than a kennel environment. We want to concrete the land and build undercover houses to put the packs in, with all-weather play areas, a veterinary centre, a wash room, and improved lighting, heating, security and road access.

"As well as better facilities, the build will help us to improve relations with our neighbours and allow us to work with them and the local environment.

Soundproofing, of course, costs considerably, and we estimate the overall cost being 100K."

From now until June, Joy and her volunteers will be fundraising for the project using social media, and applying for charity grants.

"I'm optimistic that building will start on 1 June where we will 'break open the ground'.

From now until then we will be hosting fundraising events such as online auctions." ●

Find out more

For more about the The Birkett-Smith Animal Sanctuary, visit <http://birkett-smith.org.uk> or go to www.facebook.com/groups/BirkettSmithAnimalSanctuary



Can you help?

If you would like to donate to the Big Build, you can send a cheque made payable to BSAS to: J Keys, 3 Templemans Ash, Bridport, Dorset DT6 5NX, or visit www.facebook.com/events/729742197162865/ for details of other payment methods.

Summer showtime

Dogfest 2016

Join us this summer with your four-legged friends!

There's even more to like about DogFest this year – it's twice as big for a start! Following the success of last year's events it will grow from two one-day shows to two full-weekend shows.

DogFest North returns to Arley Hall, Cheshire, from 18-19 June, while DogFest South moves to Windsor Great Park, Berkshire, and runs from 25-26 June. So save the date and start making plans!

It's still early days, but we can reveal that there will be even more have-a-go activities for your dog to take part in. This year's action-packed line-up includes Flyball, agility sessions, dog diving and

training, plus grooming sessions and gifts and treats galore. Regular highlights back again include Hill's School for Dogs, The Great Dog Walk and the Eukanuba Supervet Live Tour with the one and only Professor Noel Fitzpatrick.

There'll be more of everything – more for dogs to take part in and enjoy, and more for visitors to do, with live music, a variety of food and drink, and plenty of opportunity to shop.

Says Noel, "When we first launched DogFest, I absolutely knew that everyone who loves dogs would want to be there, so I knew it would just grow and grow. In my opinion DogFest

is the single greatest event for dogs in the universe and I intend to do all that I can to make that absolutely a reality for every single dog that attends, and for every member of every family that loves that dog.

"I'm very excited by the phenomenal growth of the events where dogs are able to play, eat, sleep, run, walk, see other doggies doing funny stuff, athletic stuff and exciting stuff – and, most importantly, be in a loving and happy environment. It's this feeling of unconditional love throughout the field that makes the day so special, and that lingers in the minds of the dogs and people who come. I've never seen a place on earth

with so many happy people and happy dogs enjoying the perfect day out for every dog.

"The new two-day shows will allow even more people and their hairy four-legged friends to come and enjoy all that DogFest has to offer. I can't wait to see everyone and get lots of face-licks at this year's events!"

JOIN IN THE FUN!

Dogs Monthly is planning to have events at both the North and South shows this year – but we will probably need some help to pull that off! If you are able to volunteer at either show please do let us know. We'd like to work with charities strong in number

Pic © Rob King/www.MojoElMundo.com



Professor Noel Fitzpatrick:
"I can't wait to see everyone and get lots of face-licks!"



Pics © Steffi Cousins/www.facebook.com/Stefficousinsphotography, Kevin Hicks/www.kyleburn.co.uk, Rob King/www.MojoElMundo.com, JD Photography, Lucy Smith



There'll be more of everything – more for dogs to take part in and enjoy, and more for visitors to do, with live music, a variety of food and drink, and plenty of opportunity to shop

around Cheshire to help us put on some really fun elements that could raise some funds for your charity. Do get in touch if this appeals!

Here are just some of the things *Dogs Monthly* plans to do at DogFest:

- Do you have a dog that can sing, talk or read? We would especially like to find a dog that can say "Noel" – so do encourage your dog to have a go at that! And take some video footage of your dog's best efforts that we can share.

- Do you know a hero – canine or human – that deserves a pat on the back? Do email all the details. We want to commend those who have gone the extra yard.

- Do you look like your dog? Could you? We'd like to see natural and augmented lookalikes at the show, and Paul Keevil – Dandie Dinmont Terrier aficionado and the world's most famous dog lookalike – will be choosing the best.

- Last year's 'Wagulator' at Dogfest was a huge success! The winner Milo, a Pointer, clocked up an astonishing 298 WPM (wags per minute). He won a beautiful portrait by the talented artist Andrew James Holmes of Captured in Pencil, and a photo session with Rob King of Mojo El Mundo, which

Competition is fierce at the Wagulator stand.



Pic © Rob King/www.MojoElMundo.com

Milo, last year's Wagulator winner.



Dogs & people

resulted in some stunning photos that will be treasured forever.

● Would you like your dog to be a cover model? We'll be running our cover star competition at both Dogfest North and South DogFest this year, and we have plans to make it even more fun for everyone who takes part. We're keen to have a photo booth at both events where you can have your dog's photo taken, and also get some expert advice on grooming

and training your supermodell! More details to come, but we'll be looking for photographers to help out at both shows, so please do get in touch if you can help us.

● Might you be a good judge or a good steward in the fun dog show area? Or able to help with booking in entries? Please drop us a line (see 'Get in touch', bottom right) and tell us what you think you might be able to help with at the show. ●

Paul Keevil (Mr Dandie Dinmont!) will be judging the dog lookalike competition.



Pic © Steffi Cousins / www.facebook.com/Stefficousinsphotography



Come to Dogfest!

For more information and to book tickets tel. 0844 581 4917 or visit www.dog-fest.co.uk

Ticket prices start at £14 for a standard adult ticket and £8 for a standard child ticket. There's also a weekend ticket available (adult £24, child £13). There'll be plenty to do at DogFest for dogs and families alike, so why not make a weekend of it!

Both venues are situated in beautiful, dog-friendly towns making DogFest the perfect getaway break this summer.

VIP day out

Fancy treating someone to a very special day? The Leucillin VIP Package costs £75 per person. Exclusive benefits include:

- Appearance and Q&A session with Professor Noel Fitzpatrick
- Fast track entrance
- Access to the Leucillin VIP Lounge all day, with undercover facilities and seating
- Premium goody bag
- Lunch (with gluten free, vegetarian and vegan options)
- Free refreshments all day (tea, coffee, soft drinks and water)
- Complimentary show guide

Find out more at www.dog-fest.co.uk or by calling 0844 581 4917.

Want to bring your trade stand?

Contact Pippa Page at Brand Events; email pippap@brandevents.co.uk



Get in touch!

If you can help as a volunteer, or want to be involved in any way at DogFest please email Beverley@petsubjects.co.uk and put 'DogFest North or/and South' in the subject area.

More details as we know them – watch this space!



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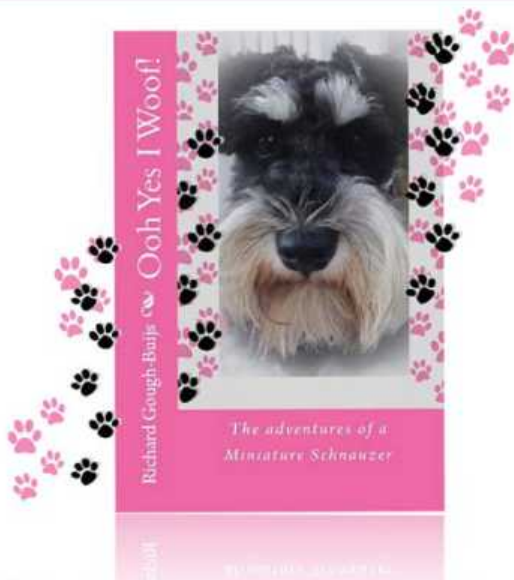
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Best friends

The
HiLife
Trophy 2016



“Scout is my rock”

Meet **Tracey Ison** and her blind Lurcher **Scout** – our first contenders for the HiLife ‘Best friends’ Trophy 2016

My five-year-old Lurcher Scout came into my life when he was just six months old, and has changed it in so many ways.

Scout didn’t have the best start in life. He was found as a puppy on the streets of County Durham and taken to a local authority pound. He was blind and believed to be deaf. He was underweight, and suffering from mange and kennel cough. Some wondered if it would

have been kinder to put him to sleep. After all, who’d want to adopt a dog with so many problems?

It took the combined efforts of three rescue centres to pull Scout from the pound and get him to safety. He joined 12 other waifs and strays on a ‘journey of hope’ across the UK to be dropped off at various centres that had space, with Scout being left in the capable hands of Sandy McCluskey at

East Midlands Dog Rescue.

My family and I weren’t actively looking for another dog at the time, but from the first moment I saw Scout, something clicked, and I knew we’d be the perfect match.

AN INSPIRATION

Although not deaf, Scout is almost totally blind, but this doesn’t hold him back in the slightest.

His love of life and

everyone in it is nothing short of inspirational, and together we use Scout’s zest for life to promote the ownership of dogs with disabilities, proving time after time that dogs like Scout can live a totally normal life and enjoy all sorts of activities, just like fully abled dogs.

Scout attended training classes and passed his puppy foundation course with flying colours. He’s since achieved his Good Citizen Dog Scheme bronze award and has even tried his hand at a little agility. Best of all, he’s become an ambassador for East Midlands Dog Rescue, attending fundraisers and meet and greets, and doing what he loves best – giving the warmest of cuddles!

Scout is a real people magnet and never fails to draw people in. We’ve made so many friends through him, and last year enjoyed our first dog-inspired holiday with some of them. Nine adults and 10 dogs, all together in Norfolk, enjoying coastal walks, seal spotting and sampling local pub grub. All down to Scout and the effect he has on people!

The greatest gift Scout has given me, though, is confidence. Our first dog, a Whippet called Ruby, was tragically killed on a walk a few years before we adopted Scout. Because of that, I worried constantly about walking our other two dogs; always fearful of a repeat of what had happened with Ruby. Walking Scout made me lose those fears because he needs to

Pic © Sue Vought: www.svphotography.co.uk

feel safe and protected at all times. He takes confidence from his handlers, so we have to be brave on his behalf.

Scout has also given me the courage to volunteer at East Midlands Dog Rescue. I'm a qualified veterinary nurse and run weekly nurse sessions at the rescue centre, helping those dogs waiting for their own forever sofa. I've since become a trustee and board member of the rescue, which gives me an incredible sense of pride.

BY MY SIDE

Over this last year, Scout has been my rock. First we lost one of Scout's 'seeing eye sisters', Izzy, who suffered from sudden-onset liver failure. She was one of Scout's guiding lights and her loss hit him very hard.

In May last year, I also lost my wonderful dad to a very aggressive and untreatable cancer that came with no warning and devastated our family.

Scout remained at my side throughout this difficult time and asked for nothing more than to just stay with me. He has cleaned away rivers of tears and provided so much comfort on the darkest of days. Without Scout I couldn't have got through the past 12 months.

What Scout brings to each day is optimism and enthusiasm. He treats every day like it's the best day ever, and our promise to him is to make sure every one of those days is filled with love and friendship.

Not bad going for a death-row pound dog... ●

What Scout brings is optimism and enthusiasm. He treats every day like it's the best day ever



Pic © Barbara Jackson: www.happypetsphotography.com

The HiLife 'Best friends' Trophy 2016

What does your dog mean to you? Is he your beautiful, bouncing, bundle of fun? Is he the friend you confide in? Tell us about your dog and the bond you share, and you could be our 'Best friends' champions of 2016!

Pets win prizes

Each month, the dogs featured in 'Best friends' will receive four 1.5kg bags of HiLife FEED ME!

This range is nutritionally balanced and contains all the goodness of dry foods, but is softer, meatier and tastier. Its popular varieties contain high-quality meat ingredients and no artificial colours or flavours.

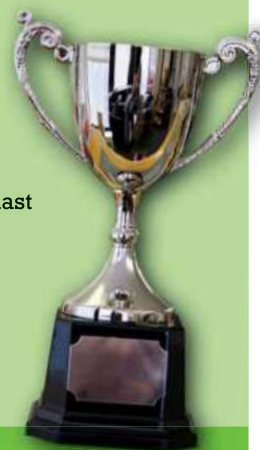


Those featured also win three jars of HiLife Special Care Daily Dental Chews. These help reduce tartar build-up, control plaque and maintain strong teeth, healthy gums and fresher breath.

Overall winner

At the end of the series, *Dogs Monthly* readers will be invited to vote for the 'Best friends' they think most deserve to win the HiLife Trophy. Voting will commence following publication of the last featured entry in the March 2017 issue.

The overall winner will receive the HiLife Trophy, engraved with their name and their dog's, plus a six-month supply of the HiLife dog food of their choice (up to a value of £300).



About HiLife

The HiLife brand of high-quality dog foods is owned by family-run Town & Country Petfoods Ltd, based in Leicestershire. To discover more about the nutritious range of HiLife dog food, find the brand on Facebook at HiLifeDog, follow it on twitter @HiLifeDog or visit www.hilifepet.co.uk



How to enter

Send us your story (between 500 and 800 words), along with a selection of good quality images that include at least one picture of you and your dog together.

Email bestfriends@dogsmonthly.co.uk with 'HiLife Best Friends' in the subject line, or post your entry to HiLife Best Friends, *Dogs Monthly*, The Old Print House, 62 High Street, Chobham, Surrey GU24 8AA.

- Digital pictures should be saved as hi-res jpegs (min 300dpi) and at as large a file size as possible – ideally, each image should be at least 2mb. If you're taking pictures specially, set your camera to its highest quality setting, so that it captures the most pixels it's capable of.
- If you're submitting your entry by post, send clear, good-quality prints only, not photocopies, and enclose an SAE if you'd like them returned.
- Nominations will be accepted until 31 December 2016.

Rules of entry

- From the entries received, 12 will be chosen. Nominees will be featured in each issue from April 2016 to March 2017.
- The overall winner receives the HiLife Trophy and can choose from the range of HiLife dog food to the prize value of £300. They can make their choice from the HiLife website, or speak to a HiLife representative about the various options.
- Employees of Pet Subjects Ltd and Town & Country Petfoods Ltd are not eligible for entry.

When dogs become jobs (15)

A class act

Teaching assistant **Toni Molloy** explains how, despite the popular advice, she works with children *and* animals, with her Shih Tzu, Maggie-May, helping to develop pupils' reading





Pets As Therapy dog Maggie-May is helping to develop the reading age of children at Earls High School in the West Midlands and is now a permanent member of staff.

She came to the attention of teaching assistant Toni Molloy after being rescued from a puppy farm by the RSPCA. Maggie was suffering from breathing difficulties at the time and her story was later told in an episode of *The Dog Rescuers* on Channel 5.

Now that her life has improved dramatically, she's giving something back by helping to improve the lives of schoolchildren. Toni explains how she has 'dogified' her career...

TONI'S STORY

I never had pets growing up – I blame my mum – but I have spent my entire career working in animal-

related occupations. I spent 15 years working for the RSPCA; six at a rehoming centre and a further nine as a veterinary nurse. Ever since I moved out, aged 18, dogs have been a huge part of my life. I immediately adopted four and have lived in a multi-dog household ever since.

Towards the end of my time at the RSPCA, I came to a crossroads of what I wanted to do. I had worked with therapy dogs before and once owned one that I took into a nursing home, but it didn't fulfil my interests as much.

Dogs become Pets As Therapy dogs through assessment where they are tested for their suitability. They are checked for behavioural traits, such as their reaction to having their hair pulled etc. We're basically checking their personality and if they would behave suitably around children. One day I realised my nine-year-old Shih Tzu, Maggie, would make an amazing therapy dog. Thanks to her great temperament,



she passed her assessment in December 2014.

I got in touch with my local co-ordinator for Pets As Therapy and was offered a position at a nearby high school, which I wasn't too keen on at first, mainly because it was my old school! Initially, when we entered the classroom, there were a few raised eyebrows, but after a few months of volunteering a few days a week, I saw how much progress we had made with the ➤

Initially, when we entered the classroom, there were a few raised eyebrows, but after a few months of volunteering a few days a week, I saw how much progress we had made with the students – as did the teachers and parents



Sometimes Maggie will be so relaxed, she'll go to sleep. The children will ask why she isn't paying attention, but we tell them Maggie is just trying to concentrate more on the story

students – as did the teachers and parents. We were offered a full-time position and we've now been here two years. I have also become a Pets As Therapy co-ordinator for this area.

I attend lessons throughout the day – six lessons in total – but Maggie will only attend four of them. She'll spend the rest of the day asleep in the office in her special bed. Obviously, there are some subjects we can't bring her into – for example, food technology – but English, science and art are all appropriate classes.

STORYTELLERS

When Maggie meets the children, I tell them that she wants to hear a story and we

angle Maggie to face the child. The child can point at the pictures and Maggie will follow their finger, so it seems as though she is really interested in the story. Sometimes Maggie will be so relaxed, she'll go to sleep. The children will ask why she isn't paying attention, but we tell them Maggie is just trying to concentrate more on the story.

The children this technique benefits the most are those with reading problems or those who become nervous or stressed when speaking to a group. Normally they are aged seven to eight, but we do often see older students, such as 12-year-olds with a reading age of six. We will take them out of class to read to Maggie, which makes them feel quite special to be spending time with her. They even ask to read to her again, making them excited about reading.

It may have begun with the Pets As Therapy reading scheme, but we soon began finding other benefits that Maggie's presence could offer, such as the emotional support. There was a young girl at the school who had behavioural problems and was very close to being expelled. We offered her the chance to spend some time with Maggie, ▶



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and she instantly fell in love with her. We offered her the opportunity to spend more time with Maggie if she continued to behave, and she did. She's now turned her life around and she says she thanks Maggie for helping her.

When Maggie became very ill at the start of 2015, the children were very worried about her. One child even used his pocket money to buy a bed for her, so she would have somewhere to rest. Now she sleeps there whenever she's not working.

GROWING NUMBERS

I've now started bringing Paddy (AKA Paddington), my German Spitz, in as well. Two weeks ago, I got another Shih Tzu puppy called Gracie and I've already begun training her with noise conditioning and taking her into areas where she will encounter similar surroundings to the school. She's doing very well and will be

assessed to become a therapy dog after six months of work.

We have been contacted by other schools, who want to know more about the programme and what it can do for their pupils. We do have lots of schools coming to visit to see Maggie in action and I provide them with details about the programme and how to get

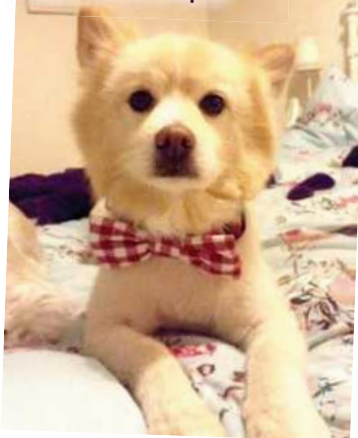
in touch with Pets As Therapy. The biggest problem we face is a lack of resources and finding the right kind of dogs, as only some are suitable for this kind of work.

It is great to see the benefits it brings and Maggie was also awarded with the Heroic Hound Award at last year's London Pet Show for all her

hard work. When we got the call to come to London and received the award we were shocked and amazed. It was a real privilege. ●

To find out more about Pets As Therapy and the Read2Dogs scheme, go to www.petsastherapy.org

Paddy (aka Paddington),
Toni's German Spitz



Maggie was also awarded with the Heroic Hound Award at last year's London Pet Show for all her hard work



Pic © Alex Sharp Photography, www.alexsharp.co.uk

You can follow Maggie and Paddy on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Maggie-Paddy-Pets-As-Therapy-332137643607865/?fref=ts>

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Two by two

What could be nicer than a dog in the family? Two dogs in the family! Trainer and behaviourist **Sue Williams** looks at why you should, why you shouldn't, and the first steps in training a twosome

It's common for families with a dog to think at some point about getting another dog, often a puppy. But is this wise, and what are the common pitfalls to avoid?

Owning two or more dogs can be extremely rewarding, and I know many people who do so successfully. As a multiple dog owner for over 20 years, I speak from experience and understand first-hand the joys – and challenges – of living with a pack.

Bringing up a puppy is hard work and requires lots of time, energy and commitment. To bring up a pup when there is already an existing dog in the family, however, makes the task ahead harder, because you not only have the new pup to consider, but also the older dog. Puppies tend to follow the lead of an older

dog, which can be a positive so long as the older dog sets a good example.

THINK HARD

Before you decide on whether getting another dog would be right for you and your family, you need to evaluate your circumstances and very carefully examine your reasons. Along with the extra time consideration, there are other factors to take into account, such as:

- Have you a large enough car to transport two dogs safely, with adequate room?
- Can you afford the additional expense?
- Do you have space in your house?

If you are thinking of getting another dog for the sake of your existing dog, however, stop right

now! You should only ever get another dog for you.

I've had many clients who've sought my help as a behaviourist because in an attempt to solve their dog's issues, they decided to get him a 'friend'. Unfortunately for them, instead of one dog with an issue, they ended up with two dogs with issues!

Never get another dog because:

- Your dog is lonely, chews things and is destructive when left alone, and you think another dog will keep him company.
- Your dog is boisterous and excitable, and you think another dog will tire him out.

Remember that dogs always seem to copy bad behaviour, rarely the good! ➤





Welcoming a new pup

So, after careful thought and consideration, you make the decision, take the plunge, and welcome a new puppy into your home. One of the first and biggest challenges you face is how to make sure it's you, not your older dog, that becomes the focus of your puppy's world. It may sound easy, but believe me, it's not all that straightforward. Think about it: you have to become more motivating and appealing than your pup's own species!

INDIVIDUAL TIME

You must spend quality, individual time with the puppy. When doing this, you must make sure you don't let your other dog become jealous and feel pushed out. To prevent this from happening, I like to make sure I've lined up a treat in the form of an enrichment activity for my older dog, such as giving them a bone or a Kong stuffed with treats.

SOCIALISATION & HABITUATION

You need to make sure your pup grows up to be confident in his own right. To achieve this you must ensure you socialise and habitualise the

puppy without your other dog present. That said, if your pup is displaying any fear, it may help him gain confidence if he's in the company of your older dog, so long as the older dog is confident. Once the puppy is happy with things while the dog's there, you can then reintroduce the pup to that particular scenario without the older dog around.

PLAY FIGHTING

One of the most common mistakes made is for the two dogs to be allowed constant access to one another; invariably this leads to them play fighting. While pups

need to learn to play and get along with other dogs, remember most eight-week-old pups will have been living with their mother and siblings,

so they're already quite well versed in the art of canine communication.

In fact, letting the pair play fight can actually lead to massive problems. This is because the older dog, by virtue of his size, will often allow quite rough play, and by doing so he inadvertently teaches the pup to be over-boisterous and impolite when greeting and playing with other canines. This often ends up with the young dog being told off or put in his place by others, which can result in him becoming wary around other dogs.

On the other hand, sensible older dogs can set a good example to an over-zealous pup, as my dog Maddie is doing here with puppy Kali, who has decided to use Maddie's tail as a tug toy. Maddie communicates to Kali that she shouldn't do this by using ritualised, inhibited behaviour, which results in Kali deferring to her.



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Training two dogs

Most people who have more than one dog would like to be able to take both dogs out together, and for each of them to be well

behaved and under control. Before this can be achieved, it's important to make sure each dog has mastered the basic control exercises – including walking on a slack

lead, the recall, and basic stays – on their own.

Once this is the case, you can then start to train them together – initially in an environment with

few distractions, such as an enclosed back garden. Once they are doing well, you can progress by taking them to busier or more exciting locations.



An excellent exercise to teach is to be able to leave one dog in a stay, while you walk the other dog around them. Here I'm doing this exercise first with Maddie in the stay, and then Kali.



Teach both dogs to sit side by side and give all their attention to you.



Once they are doing this well, you can teach them to remain there while you walk away. Neither dog should interfere with the other.

Walking two dogs

Walking two dogs together, even two well-trained dogs, can present a challenge to start with. There are two ways you can do this: either have both dogs on the same side, or one dog on either side of you. I like to teach both methods, but in either scenario I hold the leads in separate hands.

When you're walking with one dog on each side of you, remember not to give any verbal commands to turn, as you may confuse them.



When walking both dogs on the same side, I like to have the younger, less experienced dog closer to me, as shown here with Kali walking next to me.



Once you're doing well, progress to locations with more distractions. Here we are in the local town.



One of the most rewarding things when you have more than one dog is taking them somewhere fun, like the beach, and watching them run free. It's essential, though, that when you let them off the lead, both dogs remain under your control. While it's important for them to have fun, play and enjoy themselves, for safety's sake they must always return to you immediately you call them. ●



About the author



Sue Williams
BSc is the chairwoman of the Guild of Dog Trainers and a member of the Canine

and Feline Behaviour Association, and specialises in dog training and behaviour modification. Sue is passionate about teaching using methods based on understanding and communication. She runs The Canine Centre in North Wales.

Book review

Monsieur le vet

The life of a vet in the rural French countryside sounds an idyllic and charming one, but the reality is very different, as Sylvain Balteau's new book reveals. **Victoria Heywood** finds out more...

French vet Sylvain Balteau has lived in the Haute-Garonne at the foot of the Pyrenees all of his life. Over the years, his appointments have taken him from the ailments of beloved village pets to the cow barns of the countryside. Through his blog, now published a new book *Monsieur Le Vet*, we can become absorbed in Sylvain's world, as reader and author attempt to understand why

some people place so much value on the lives of their animals – and some do not.

Sylvain claims he wanted to share his experiences to show the 'human' side of vets. Tired of seeing those in his profession accused of being money-hungry and uncaring towards the animals they treat, he started to write openly about the situations that have affected him, the cases that have moved him, and

the owners that have either surprised or appalled him.

However, he does inadvertently confirm one rather sticky stereotype; from early on in the book, you will have to get used to the fact that Sylvain spends most of his time narrating from the back-end of a cow, with his arm, well, you know...

And yet somehow, this isn't grim or too graphic to read; rural life takes on a kind of

Blonde d'Automne
(Autumn Blond, a
photo by Sylvain).



sacred reverence from this strange position. At each of the calf births he attends, you can feel the buzz in the air, smell the straw, and sense the nerves of the farmer, who can do little more than wait nervously in the background as Sylvain works to bring a new life into the world.

Sometimes it's midnight, sometimes it's the middle of the day and passing village children will poke their faces around the barn door in wonder. Sometimes the newborn calf has to be covered with a blanket or carried inside the farmhouse to warm by the fire.

There's always an overwhelming sense that these farmers, particularly the elderly ones, really care about their herds. This is particularly strong in the story of the farmer who tended to

his elderly cow of 18 years, turning her and feeding her, even though she had no name and her pregnancy would never reach full-term, showing more compassion for one of a hundred livestock than some people show their pets.

It is a world that is changing rapidly, says Sylvain, and soon he will be struggling to recognise it. The old, small farms are disappearing, and the next generation is dealing with bigger herds. They have to be more technical, thinking about the health of the herd as a whole, rather than individuals. With the increasing numbers of organic farms, and cows being left free to roam, the connection between the farmer and his animals isn't the same.

Back within the walls of the veterinary practice, one chapter details the day Sylvain

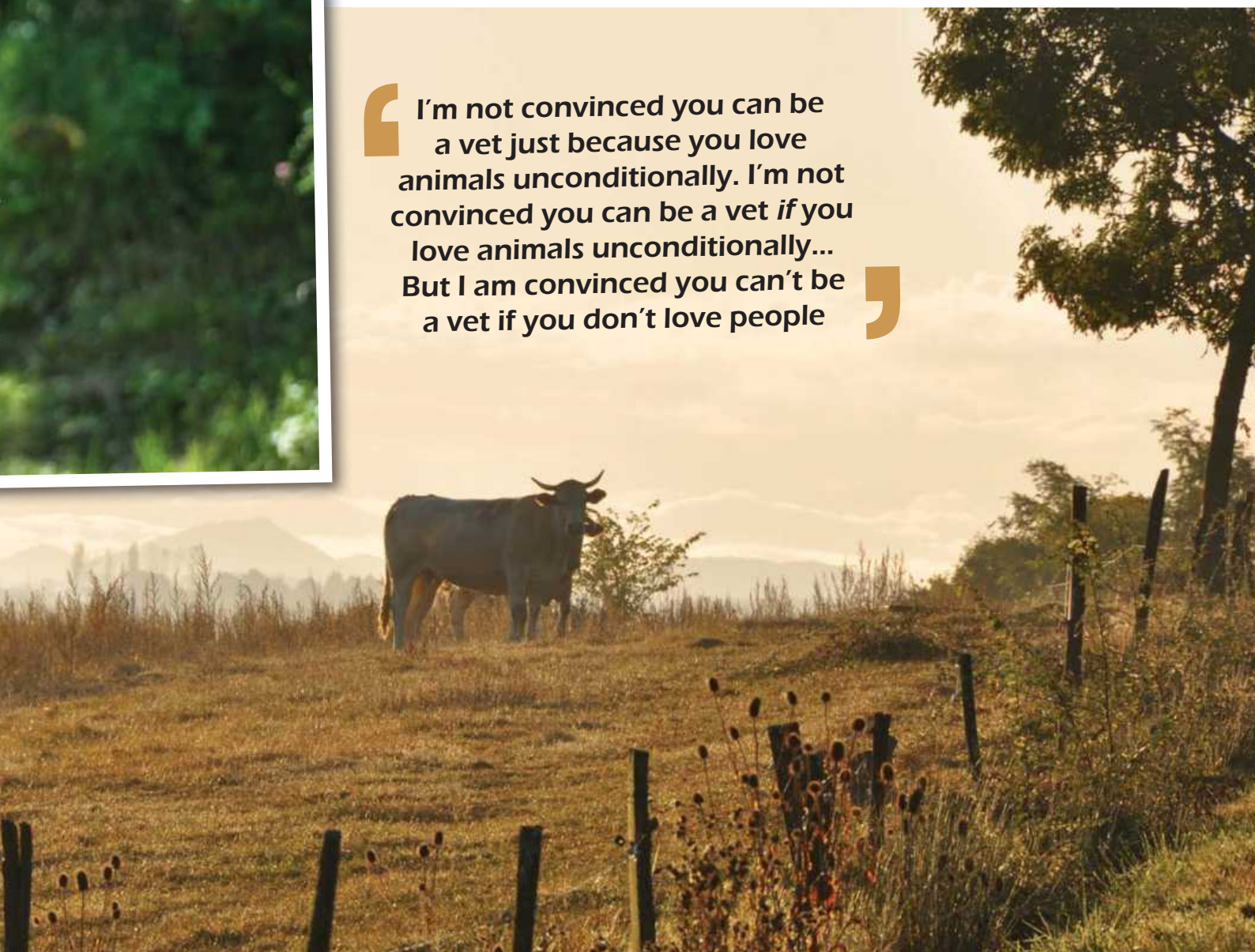
works solidly, hour after hour, to deal with the bloody aftermath of the village's annual boar hunt. French hunting dogs are brought in, having been seriously injured, some even embedded with boar teeth, cradled in the blood-soaked arms of the French hunters and yet still wagging their tails, if weakly.

One wonders how Sylvain can possibly relate to the men that cause such damage to their animals in their pursuits, but he insists it has actually altered his perception.

"After being with them long term, I began to know how they care and many do the best for the dogs," he says. "They spend all of their time running with the dogs; there is a strong connection and they understand them. When they know a dog is going to die or a wound is



I'm not convinced you can be a vet just because you love animals unconditionally. I'm not convinced you can be a vet *if* you love animals unconditionally... But I am convinced you can't be a vet if you don't love people



Dogs & people

dangerous, you can see they care. Not all of them, but far more than I first thought. Many will keep the dogs when they get old or can no longer work.

"And at the moment, there is nothing else to regulate the wild boar population. They are dangerous and destroy everything," he shrugs.

Sylvain still deals with the situations every vet does. The child with the pocket money to treat her hamster, the immaculate couple deliberating on the future of their elderly and now rather less adorable lap dog, and even the British families, restoring dilapidated farmhouses and running out of money, and then following through the regulations of the pet passport scheme.

Among the cases, you will find a favourite, and one doesn't have an owner to speak for her. Freezer's story is told from her



A calf Sylvain helped deliver.

I know all the people, I follow their animals from birth until death, and then I am there for the new pet after that



imagined perspective, making it all the more difficult to take. A young and strapping American Staffordshire Terrier, she is deemed to be a Pit Bull type, a banned 'dangerous' dog, after she was handed in as a stray to the veterinary practice.

Freezer had recently had puppies, perhaps the reason she had been turfed on to the streets. As the team at the practice worked to find a rescue that will take her, the staff all bond with Freezer, and her name is derived from her constant loud whining for love, as staff joke she will end up in the freezer if she carries on.

The story doesn't end well. Like many of Sylvain's anecdotes, he works to question the reader's perception of an issue. France's breed-specific legislation claimed Freezer's life, and we are not spared from its brutality, as Freezer's trusting, oblivious and heart-breaking commentary runs until the final injection. In the front of the book, you can read that Sylvain has in part dedicated his writing to this dog.

Even though it was years ago now, Sylvain is obviously still quite upset by what happened.

"She died for nothing," he says quietly, lamenting laws that make no more sense in France than they do anywhere else.

It's enough to ask whether

there was ever a point when he no longer wanted to be a vet?

"If you had asked me that 10 years ago, I would have said, 'Soon'. But now I am in the right place. I know all the people, I follow their animals from birth until death, and then I am there for the new pet after that."

"I will keep going as long as I can."

We just hope that Sylvain will keep writing, too. ●

Monsieur Le Vet; My Life with Animals in Rural France by Sylvain Balteau is published by Icon Books, www.iconbooks.com





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Winter wonderland

In the Canadian Rockies in deepest winter, **Jo Knowsley** goes to meet Megan Routley and her 100-strong team of Alaskan Huskies who simply live to run...





Leonardo DiCaprio's Oscar-nominated film *The Revenant* has given an unexpected boost to winter tourism in Canada's Rocky Mountains – as well as to Alaskan Huskies.

The region is traditionally a summer playground, but the movie, which was filmed among these majestic snow-capped mountains, has drawn hundreds of curious visitors from far afield, including the UK.

One of those to benefit is Megan Routley and her dog-sledding team, who have been fully booked since Christmas. Dog-loving visitors keen to experience the harshness of the Canadian winter – with waist-deep snow and temperatures as low as minus 25°C – are taken on thrilling 10-mile rides through the winter wonderland of Banff, Canada's first national park. There's also the added excitement of being in the middle of a region inhabited by grizzly bears, cougars and wolves.

PURE ATHLETES

Just like Leonardo's rugged movie character – who survives a 200-mile trek through the Rockies – Megan's 100 Huskies are as tough as they come.

"My dogs are no Hollywood Huskies," the owner of Kingmik Dog Sled Tours says proudly. "They're the Olympic athletes



It's the coolest job in the world

of the dog world and are famed for performance, not looks.

"I can trace my dogs' bloodlines back seven generations. They started out as wild dogs, or dogs which bred with wolves, that became domesticated over time. Over the generations they have

become a breed.

"Before the railways opened up Canada, people used horses and these dog teams to make this country work."

Unlike the thick-furred Siberian Huskies so popular in postcards and on screen, these Alaskan Huskies are purebred

for endurance, and are capable of running 100 miles, resting for four hours, then running another 100 miles – a feat they can repeat for up to 14 days.

These are the dogs that run Alaska's celebrated Iditarod, a 1,000-mile battle against the elements that's run over 10 days in temperatures that can plunge to minus 40°C – twice as cold as your kitchen freezer.

"The dogs get injuries and I've had my share of damage," Megan says. "I've had teeth knocked out, a broken arm. It's a rough and tumble existence.

"One time a skiing friend of mine ran into a grizzly bear on the trail early in the morning. She telephoned and told me. That was one of the few times we cancelled a run for the day."

Moose, says Megan, are the most dangerous threat to the pack, as they see dogs as wolves and will even attack.

winter she used to divide her time between that and working as a mountain and ski guide, but then she caught the sledding bug, and her life has never been the same.

"I grew up with dogs as family pets, but we didn't run dogs," she explains. "My father was a doctor and my mother was a schoolteacher. Where I grew up, I had a horse and went out on sailing boats. My brother became a doctor. There was nothing in my early life – aside from the fact that I was an adrenalin junkie – that really prepared me for this. I did want to be a vet, but quite early we discovered I was allergic to certain animals. I seem to be much better now."

Megan has been running Kingmik Tours at Lake Louise, which is also a popular skiing destination, since 2003. The name of the company means 'top dog' in the Inuit language, ➤



THE SLEDDING BUG

Megan, who's 55, has been 'running' dogs for over 20 years, since she discovered the joy of silently sledding across the frozen wastes while working as a geological field assistant, looking for diamonds. In





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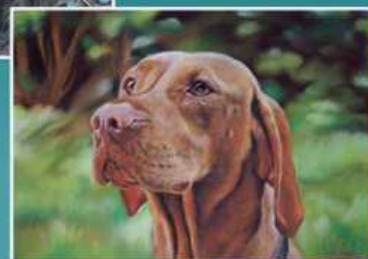
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which is also the language used to give instructions to the dogs.

Her life revolves around breeding, running and caring for more than 100 Alaskan Huskies, who work from December to April, then spend the summer at her home five hours' drive south of Lake Louise. She has exclusive access to the trails across Banff.

"I used to be married to a businessman," says Megan. "He thought running the dogs together would be romantic, but it was too tough and he moved back to the city."

Each year, at the end of the summer, Megan makes the 300-mile drive from her summer home to the Rockies with three trailers, four trucks

and around 100 dogs, basing themselves at the Kicking Horse Canyon, an hour away from the trails. The icy highways can be deadly – the year before last, her season ended early after a potentially disastrous collision overturned the truck, but thankfully none of the dogs were injured.

RELENTLESS

The dogs live for their runs – up to 40 miles a day – and are housed in individual kennels. Their relentless energy is contagious, with their excited barks and howls echoing across the serene mountain valleys.

"If they weren't kept on leads at night you can imagine the complete mayhem," says

Their relentless energy is contagious, with their excited barks and howls echoing across the serene mountain valleys

Megan, who has received prestigious awards for having the "Best cared-for dog team" in Canada. "It also allows us to carefully monitor each dog's food intake."

Yet the rustic log cabin where Megan spends the cold winter is as chaotic as the sled trips are calm; it's stuffed full with sled covers, dog harnesses, endless lists, and the ointments she has created to treat cracked paws and other canine ailments. Some of the dogs wear custom-made boots when the temperatures drop below minus 20°C.

For Megan and her team of nine dog mushers and assistants, it can be a relentless, round-the-clock effort to maintain and sustain the dogs.

"It's all-consuming," she says, with a laugh. "I find myself working 18-20 hour days to avoid working for someone else for eight hours a day! But I love the dogs, how honest they are and easy to deal with – easier than people. If I ever feel overwhelmed by anything I go out and see the dogs. They've all got such distinct personalities."

We meet seven-year-old Two Step who Megan says has "a distinct sense of humour – the clown of the pack"; three-year-old Lexie who's "rather snipey and whiney – the girl at high school who wears little boots and a skirt"; Milly, aged two, who is so super-sweet she's about to go to a new home as a pet (albeit one where she'll get plenty of exercise); and Banger, aged one-and-a-half, who's "a typical teenage boy – a boisterous tearaway who needs to learn some manners!"

BEHIND THE SCENES

We've joined Megan as her day begins at 6am, for a rare glimpse behind the scenes. First we head out to feed the dogs, who

each consume 6,000 calories a day, in a mixture of watery soups, and chicken and beef. The sun won't be up for another two-and-a-half hours and everybody in this environment needs to be tough.

Megan's greatest challenge is finding good staff. "People come on a dog-sledding tour, think it's romantic and want to come out and work. But their sense of romance fades when they learn it's just so much hard work."

She recently advertised for 'mushers' (those who drive the sleds) but is wary of people wearing rose-tinted glasses, who don't have experience of working in the wild.

One who made the grade and came to work with Megan last year is 35-year-old Briton Lucy Dorman, a former scientist



Pics © Oscar Kornyei





in human endurance with a PhD in sports science. Lucy fell in love with the dogs, and gave up a well-paid job to make the leap to mushing two years ago.

Lucy moved to Canada in 2007 and was a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Ottawa before working alongside the Canadian military on research into human endurance and extreme weather conditions –

including a stint in search and rescue. In her spare time one summer, she spent three months biking 4,706 miles across Canada.

"I was looking for dog-related activities and did some training with Megan last year," says Lucy. "Sled dogs are the ultimate athletes and there's a crossover in how they train the dogs with how you train humans for marathons.

"The first time I tried sledding I just thought 'wow – this is awesome!'. It's long days, and extreme conditions in a very remote area. It's the coolest job in the world, though most people don't see the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. The mountains are just the most amazing environment."

Megan's dogs retire when they're around 10-12 years old. But when will she stop?

"I don't know what else I'd do," she says simply. "It's my business, but it's also my life. And to sell the dogs as a business... well it would be like selling family. That would be tough."

FULL COMMITMENT

By the end of each working day most of the dogs will have run the 10-mile round-trip two to three times. They are fed in between each run, and then loaded into their kennel transports for the hour-long drive back to Kicking Horse Canyon, where they sleep in their straw-lined kennels each night. Megan, however, will continue to work: checking temperatures, calling vets if necessary and organising shipments of the dogs' meat and food. During the peak Christmas period she survived on four hours sleep a night.

Back at the resort of Lake Louise, Megan's potential customers are likely to be sipping cocktails and tucking into haute cuisine at the elegant Fairmont Lake Louise Chateau, built for well-heeled tourists in the 1920s' heyday of train travel to the Rockies. Then, wealthy tourists would arrive at the railway station (now an heritage restaurant) to be ferried the remaining few miles to the chateau by horse and carriage.

Today's visitors come by coach and car – and mainly, these days, during the summer months. But winter tourists are guaranteed tranquility, and a certain sense of magic and romance. Just beware of falling in love with the notion of working with sled dogs... ●



Slowly does it

Desensitisation can be a long, slow process, but the efforts are certainly worth it – especially if the end result is a dog that loves going to see the once-dreaded vet, says **Hannah Lyon**

Oscar, a nine-year-old Springer Spaniel, was rehomed by his owner, Anne Birch, from Springer Rescue.

Oscar had always been a slightly nervous dog, both at home and when he came to see me at the vet surgery, but his owners worked hard with him to

build his confidence at home and he grew into a loving family pet.

However, he was never very confident when in the surgery, and unfortunately, a year after being rehomed, he developed Addison's disease, which is a metabolic problem that affects the body's electrolyte balance. This meant Oscar needed

regular blood tests to monitor his condition.

Despite everyone's best efforts and gentle treatment, Oscar became very traumatised during his visits – he would often scream in response to being handled and restrained for his blood sampling. Oscar would

anticipate things happening to him – and this was often worse than the actual event itself.

The simple fact is that many dogs do not like going to the vet. This can vary from a dog who is not too keen and would like to get in and out as quickly as possible, to a dog who is a gibbering wreck in the corner of the waiting room, let alone the consulting room.

It is understandable if you look at it from the dog's point of view. The vet clinic is a





strange place with unfamiliar people and unfamiliar dogs who are also worried. The place smells funny and people wear odd clothes. Then they get examined; dogs are usually not feeling well anyway or they have hurt themselves, and then may often get an injection. However nice we are, it is not surprising that your dog may not like going to see the vet!

So what can we do to change this? We can change your dog's fear and anxiety to a positive emotional state, using a process called desensitisation and counter-conditioning. This is a gradual training process, which helps a dog gradually to become used to, and eventually like, something he originally did not like or was scared of.

The desensitisation part is gradually exposing the dog to the 'scary' situation (the vet's) at a level he can cope with and build it up until it is no longer scary to the dog. The counter-conditioning part involves changing the now 'not scary' situation into a positive situation that the dog actively enjoys – this makes it less likely that the dog will revert to being scared again.

PATIENCE WITH PATIENTS

I began working with Oscar on a desensitisation programme to help him become more

comfortable with coming into the practice and having his blood taken.

Dogs often become stressed as soon as they realise they are coming to the vet's. They can become anxious in the car if they recognise the journey, in the car park when they arrive, or in the waiting room. For desensitisation to be successful, the process must ideally start just before the point where the dog begins to get anxious.

In Oscar's case, he often started to get wound up in the waiting room, anticipating the consultation with the vet. So, Anne would initially just bring Oscar into the waiting room during a quiet time in the day and either play a little with him or give him some food rewards and then take him home again. This helped to break the association that whenever Oscar came to the vet's, something horrible was going to happen.

Oscar also began to wear a bandana sprayed with Adaptil dog-appeasing pheromone

spray. Bitches produce a natural pheromone, which helps provide the puppies with a feeling of safety and security. Adaptil is a synthetic version of this pheromone, which can be used to help dogs deal better with stressful situations. Anne felt the bandana sprayed with Adaptil had a positive effect on Oscar's behaviour and he was less manic in the car.

Once Oscar was happier and more confident coming into the waiting room, we started weekly sessions with Oscar coming into the consulting room, having food rewards, a game with his ball and going home again.

Once Oscar was happily pulling to get into the consulting room (which indicated he was no longer fearful or anxious), we started the process of counter-conditioning. We began to teach Oscar that coming to the vet's was a great opportunity to earn food rewards. We gradually introduced training exercises, such as 'sit', 'down' and 'give paw' in exchange for food rewards and his tennis ball. We started with exercises that Oscar already knew how to do easily so he could be quickly rewarded. The 'give paw' exercise was particularly important, as it helped to increase Oscar's confidence and acceptance of being handled.

Gradually, over time, we built up the exercises and Oscar would allow more and more handling. We then introduced the equipment needed for blood sampling (the needle and syringe, swab and collection tubes) and a vet nurse into the equation. We continued the training exercises with the nurse and equipment around, as this helped the training sessions to simulate an actual blood-testing appointment as much as possible.

Unfortunately, due to his medical condition, Oscar needed to have blood samples taken during our training.

We can change your dog's fear and anxiety to a positive emotional state, using a process called desensitisation and counter-conditioning

Training & behaviour

Ideally, when carrying out desensitisation and counter-conditioning, the dog should not be exposed to the fear-inducing situation. However, this could not be avoided in Oscar's case.

When Oscar came in for a blood sample, we would still do some training at the beginning and, again, after we had taken his blood. He was still initially distressed by the procedure itself but recovered very quickly. He was happy, wagging his tail and playing with his ball before he left, which he never would have done before.

On a few early occasions, where Oscar became very distressed at having blood taken, we gave him a drug after the sampling, which blocks the memory of a traumatic event. This helped to stop Oscar's training being set back too far.

Oscar has become more confident and happy over the time we have been carrying out the training. Anne reports that now when she gets his training bag and bandana out, Oscar becomes very excited

at the prospect of coming to the vet's. When I call him in from the waiting room, he runs to greet me very happily.

Oscar is now much more comfortable having his blood taken, too. He has learned what to expect and that it will end in a training session, food rewards and his ball. He is much calmer during the sampling procedure; he trusts us now and sits still and quietly, waiting for his game at the end.

Oscar will never enjoy having his blood taken, but at least he now actually enjoys coming to the surgery. We make sure that whenever he needs a blood sample, he has three appointments – each a week apart: the first one to remind him how much fun it is coming to see us; the second one for the blood sample; and the third one to show him he does not always have a blood sample when he comes.

Desensitisation and counter-conditioning is a slow process. It takes patience and commitment to bring your dog to the vet regularly, but it really is worth it for a confident dog, who is happy to visit the clinic. Just ask Oscar! ●



About the author



Hannah Lyon graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2003. After working for several years in small-animal practice, in 2005 she completed the Coape Advanced Diploma in Companion Animal Behaviour and Training, and in 2011 was accepted as a Practitioner of the Coape Association of Pet Behaviourists and Trainers (CAPBT). She is currently completing her thesis year for the MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour at the University of Lincoln.

Hannah combines academic learning with practical training skills, being a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT Member No 00981) and an Agility Club First Class Approved Instructor. She regularly competes in agility and canicross with her own dogs – four rescue English Springer Spaniels, a working Cocker Spaniel, and a Springer-Pointer cross.

Hannah runs the Behaviour Service at Ark House Vets in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire and sees cases from within the practice and on veterinary referral from other practices. The Behaviour Service offers consultations and assessments at Ark House, at a local outdoor training facility or in clients' own homes.

A large proportion of her caseload involves working with 'other dog' problem behaviours (aggression, boisterousness and nervousness).

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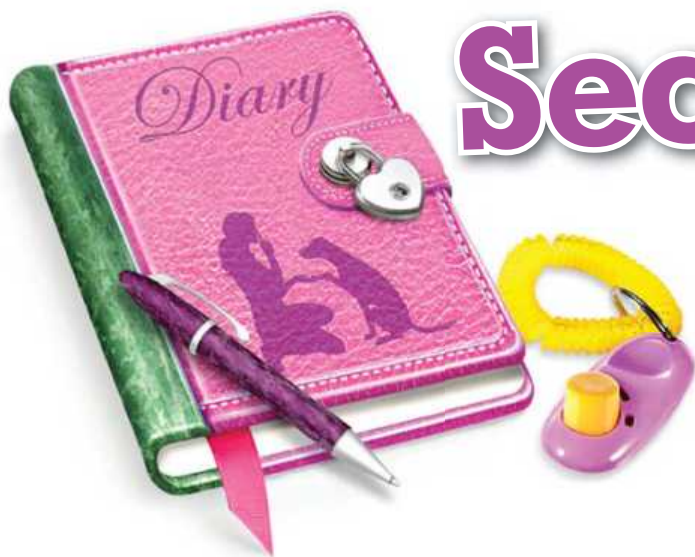
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Secret diary of a dog trainer

What's life really like for a successful dog trainer? Well sometimes, it seems, you don't even get as far as the training...

"I don't believe in dog training," said the voice on the phone. "My dogs are fine just the way they are."

I briefly wondered why the caller had even rung me, but she sounded jaunty and quite positive, so I waited for her to elaborate.

"The workmen thought he was funny. He was obsessed with their boots," she continued. "We couldn't keep him away, he loved those boots so much."

Interesting, I thought, as I made notes on my scribble pad. Often these pages are filled with the most intimate details of personal family lives, snippets of conversation, comment and gossip. We trainers have a confidentiality policy for good reason. I've heard details of planned divorces, hated in-laws, mental health issues, and on one memorable occasion, an offer to view a very well-hidden tattoo.

Explaining the details involved with our appointment, I enjoyed chatting with this upbeat, vivacious lady. She joked about the dog's obsession and her other dog's obvious confusion about the whole 'boots fixation'. Admitting she didn't know what to do about it seemed like the first step towards a training solution.

I'd soon realise, of course, that the simplest-looking situations should be taken

more seriously than at face value. Sometimes we only learn lessons the hard way. This was long before my cynical phase set in.

FOOT FETISH

I filed the notes along with the diary date, sent the owner the relevant forms and began to put together a tentative training plan. The dog was described as a puppy, a crossbreed of Heinz 57 origin, medium in size. Most of all, there didn't appear to be much more to the issue than his love of men's boots.

Frequently, young dogs love grabbing hold of trouser legs and pyjama bottoms as people move about. This is funny for the onlooker but can be annoying for the recipient. Usually, it's enough to just keep the puppy on a house line – a long, lightweight lead that acts as a simple method of steering the dog away. The behaviour is so common that every trainer has a pre-arranged plan for households with puppies on how to deal with this easy-to-resolve nuisance.

Arriving at the house a few days later, I noticed the tidy front garden. Each paving slab was pressure-washed to a pale sheen without a hint of moss. The gravel was level, the lawn precisely edged. I imagined a host of workmen going in and out of the neat home, each one taunting the poor dog as their

boots clumped up and down.

A petite, immaculately dressed lady greeted me at the door, and beamed happily at my arrival. I moved to enter but her face formed a delicate move of disdain. She gestured behind her at the polished floor and then eyed my feet.

"I have just mopped my floors and..." She looked down at my dog trainer footwear – lightweight but comfortable walking shoes with plenty of sole and, if I'm honest, maybe just a little mud, but not much and never anything that might transfer. I blushed, as I never wear my really mucky wellies to appointments – they stay in the back of the car. I always called these shoes my 'clean' pair, and I'd never trodden mud into people's houses, least of all my own. I raised my eyes to hers and saw her expression of disgust at my apparently filthy footwear.

As I removed my shoes and put them as neatly as I could by the door, I thanked my lucky stars that I'd put on a pair of plain, pale blue socks that day, rather than my daughter's sparkly penguin ones. We were going on holiday the following morning and all the washing was up to date. Otherwise it could easily have been a mismatched pair.

In the background I could hear the dogs barking violently at my arrival. They sounded distant, but the shrill

barking echoed through the house.

Their owner searched my expression and commented, "That's my older dog. He always makes a fuss when he hears the door, but he's always happy to see people. He wasn't bothered when we had the builders here. He just goes to his bed once he's said hello."

She handed me my completed set of forms, explaining that when visitors arrive she usually lets the dogs calm down a bit first. This makes sense; allowing a dog to leap



all over guests is never a useful lesson for them. It teaches them to greet people in a crazy, overexcited way, and as with all behaviour, the outcome can dictate what happens next time. A dog that's allowed to hurl himself at people with all the charm of a wrecking ball is one that learns this is what happens every time.

IDEAL HOME

We entered the kitchen – beautiful, newly fitted white units and a white-tiled floor. A brave lady, I decided, to have such pale units with two dogs around.

We covered the main aspects of what we would do, while the dogs quietened down in

another room. Then she offered to bring them in.

"Do what you normally do," I uttered, fatefully.

She crossed to the utility room door and opened it. A brief, reddish-orange, dog-shaped blur skittered across the kitchen floor as rapidly moving claws met gleaming tiles.

The next thing I was aware of, my foot was being held in a vice-like clamp. Well, not my foot. My toes. And not all my toes; just one. The pinch was deadly. I couldn't move away, couldn't retreat. My whole leg jerked as the dog yanked my little toe in his mouth. There was no other sound, no growling. Over and over again, the dog tugged without release.

In shock, I looked down at his shaking head, seeing him properly for the first time. He was too small to pull me over, but far bigger than described – and certainly no puppy.

From these heart-stopping seconds, everything suddenly returned to normal speed. I tried to reach down to remove the dog, while not wishing to place any more of my extended limb in his mouth, but he simply wouldn't relinquish his grip, and his mouth closed tighter and tighter. I didn't feel any pain; more a crushing shock that numbed any sense of what was really happening.

The lady shrieked and grabbed the dog's head, prising his jaws apart, and

he finally let go. I pulled my foot safely out of reach as she bundled him back through the open door. She slammed it behind her, examining one of her hands, as his teeth had grabbed her skin in the struggle.

"He bit me!" she squealed, waving her hand in the air.

I stood on the same spot, my foot raised. My pale blue sock had changed colour somewhat as a spreading dark stain began to materialise where the dog's teeth had been. I dared not remove it, and unsure of what to do, I froze with my pen in one hand, notes in the other, and foot still six inches above the floor.

I then did an utterly silly thing. As if nothing had

The next thing I was aware of, my foot was being held in a vice-like clamp. Well, not my foot. My toes. And not all my toes; just one. The pinch was deadly



Dogs & people

happened, I sat down on the kitchen chair and continued to write my notes.

The owner paused for a moment, offering me a cup of tea. I declined, and carried on chatting as if this happened every time I visited someone's home. She joined me at the table. We were both so paralysed with embarrassment that it seemed the only civilised option.

During the conversation that followed, I found out that while she referred to him as a puppy, this dog was two years old. That the amusing, supposedly endearing 'boots fetish' involved the workmen being unable to shake off the dog to the point where the boots had to be removed before the dog could be restrained. The last time this had happened, the dog had bitten one of the men on the hand.

Not wishing to embarrass the owner even further, I tentatively glanced down at my injured toe. The blue sock was even darker in colour than before and had dripped a small pool of blood on to the floor below. My eyes flicked back up to the owner, who had also been peeking down. We both pretended nothing had happened.

A sudden movement made me jump, but it was the other dog; the one she'd promised had always stayed calm. He was, indeed, very calm as he began cleaning the floor beneath my foot.

I finished the appointment, gave my notes to the owner, hobbled to the door, carefully replaced my shoes and left, swapping promises of further training.

Only when I got home did I begin to accept the events that had unfolded. I called my husband and cried in panic as I gingerly removed my shrivelled sock...

STYLISH FOOTWEAR

I spent my holiday with one foot encased in a Croc shoe; the only type my swollen toes could manage. The nurses said I was lucky to keep my toe at all, as they administered plenty of tuts and a course of antibiotics from the emergency doctor. No stitches, as they don't like to close any wound that could be infected with bacteria from a dog's mouth.

Once I'd had a chance to reflect, I wrote down my recommendations and posted them to the owner. The dog needed

Only when I got home did I begin to accept the events that had unfolded. I called my husband and cried in panic as I gingerly removed my shrivelled sock...

some serious and long-term work, far more than she might have admitted.

I didn't see or hear from the dainty lady again, and the months passed.

Later that summer my friend's son came to see me, asking about some work to earn extra pocket money. He was a responsible boy and had just finished his GCSEs, but had recently taken it upon himself to start up a dog walking round. These were the days before professional dog walkers, and most people would happily let their dog go out with a local youngster for a pound or two. It was then that he cleared his throat and told me about his most recent client.

"Her dogs made such a noise when she rang me," he began, "that I wasn't sure what to expect, but she said they were only puppies."

"I went round to her home to meet them and get to know them. She wanted me to walk them. It was a really nice house. She invited me in but told me to take my boots off. All I could hear was these dogs making loads of noise, and I was scared, so I said I had to go home."

At this point he looked embarrassed.

"I think she knew I was a bit worried, and she asked if I minded the barking, so I said yes, I did. I don't know if I should tell you what she said next, you might be annoyed..."

I looked at him steadily and told him he didn't need to say anything. He stuttered a bit, then mumbled,

"She said she doesn't believe in dog training. Her dogs are fine just as they are." ●





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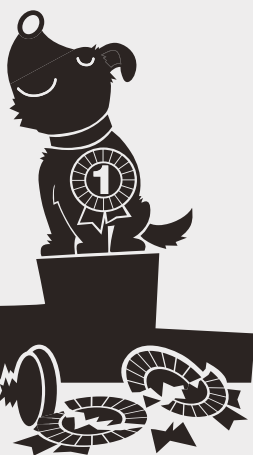
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The little tsarina

How can such a charming, small dog cause so much grief? **Sue Gilmore** has some advice for the owners of a little Dachshund who came from Russia with love



Dachshund, posed by a model.

A Dachshund who thinks she's a Rottweiler? Yes, that's Daxy, a three-year-old bundle of energy from Russia. She's black and tan, slender and full of charm, but she rules her new home like a tsarina. Her doting owners react to her every whim and enjoy the 'protection' that Daxy is always happy to display when they have visitors, or to rebuff any potential threat posed by the strange sounds that regularly occur when you live on the outskirts of a big city.

Daxy was born and raised in Russia. At the age of four months, she left her littermates to enjoy life near Moscow with her new owners, Naomi and Ivan, but work commitments meant they had to return to Naomi's home in Britain. The upheaval of moving to a foreign country didn't seem to faze Daxy in the least, and she settled into her new home without a problem; in fact, she quickly learned that if she barked when she heard strange noises in her new home, she was rewarded with praise, strokes and sometimes treats.

HOME ALONE

Both Naomi and Ivan work full-time, which meant Daxy had been left alone for a lengthy period of the working day. Ten hours is a long time to leave any dog home alone – way too long – but perhaps even more stressful for a young dog

accustomed to life in Russia was the boredom.

Naomi and Ivan called me to solve the problem behaviours Daxy was exhibiting, including the onset of separation anxiety, which was hardly surprising in the circumstances. Life was becoming difficult with Daxy generally, and friends, relatives and visitors were being deterred from entering the home.

My arrival met with Daxy's usual 'greeting'. The minute I rang the doorbell, she went into action, and the aggressive barking I witnessed was part of her ritual of rushing up and down the hall. Ivan came to the door and scooped up Daxy so that her continued frenzied barking was now happening at eye level to me – something that would be extremely intimidating for an unsuspecting visitor.

My first comment upon entering the home was to the effect that as Daxy has four legs, she should be allowed to stand on them! Ivan put her on the floor and the aggression – which had been reinforced by the back-up Ivan had provided by holding her – subsided almost immediately, and we were able to put a slip lead on her and regain control. Peace. The pandemonium created by such a small dog stopped almost immediately and we were able to introduce ourselves.

Comfortably seated in a cosy dining room, we were

My first comment upon entering the home was to the effect that as Daxy has four legs, she should be allowed to stand on them!

joined by Naomi's mother and her partner, who are now looking after Daxy during the day. They'd taken pity on her being left alone for five days a week, so Naomi delivers her very early each morning to a village on the other side of the city where she's cared for and given an abundance of affection until it's time to go home in the early evening. So Daxy is now disrupting the routine of two households, but there's no question these people are totally devoted to the little Russian Dachshund!

MIXED MESSAGES

As time goes by, however, the problems seem to be getting worse. Daxy rules both households, and whatever she wants to do appears, inadvertently, to be reinforced. As I mentioned, Daxy barks aggressively at visitors, so she is picked up in a vain attempt to stop her intimidating behaviour. She pesters for attention when people are busy doing other things, particularly when they are relaxing, watching television or reading. She pulls like a husky when out on the lead, and rushes ahead through doorways to ensure

that whatever is happening, she's there first.

Daxy sleeps in bed with Naomi and Ivan – yes, right in the middle, between them! This may also contribute to the onset of Daxy's separation anxiety, which is one of the most distressing and difficult problem behaviours to solve.

I suggested that Daxy should sleep downstairs in her secure, very comfortable indoor kennel. Over a period of a week or two, her sleeping arrangements should be changed so that she first sleeps in the kennel beside Naomi and Ivan's bed, then out on the landing, and finally the kennel should be taken downstairs. Despite a few distressed expressions, everyone agreed to accept this suggestion and also, ultimately, not to allow Daxy upstairs at all. Being a Dachshund, the steep stairs were definitely a challenge for her in any case!

EARN & LEARN

Naomi and Ivan's feeding routine was also very lax. Daxy didn't like her dry food very much and was inclined to just nibble a bit now and then. She was more interested in the copious amount of



Training & behaviour



treats she received for free, without having to earn them. I suggested that a more natural diet would be more suitable so, using small pieces of fresh meat, I demonstrated a simple routine to engage Daxy in some training, such as asking her to “sit”, “watch” or “wait” before giving her a release command to allow her to eat the tasty food on offer. She was ravenous and very enthusiastic – as well as being very keen to sit, watch and wait! This is definitely a good training method; an easy way to teach manners and respect.

Addressing the problem of visitors coming into the home

was fairly easily resolved and one of the methods I demonstrated was to simply slip a lead on Daxy when the doorbell rang, and teach her to sit quietly behind me as I opened the door and invited the visitors in. The visitors were asked not to acknowledge Daxy, but just to come in and make themselves comfortable.

All the while, Daxy was controlled on the lead and was expected to sit respectfully until she was invited to receive the visitors’ attention. This worked well when practised by Naomi and Ivan, and I’m sure they’ll be able to dispense with the lead fairly soon. Daxy will afford

Naomi due respect, and Naomi will be confident that she will deal with any situations as they arise.

Dachshunds can be quite feisty and whenever Daxy glimpses another dog when out walking, or in the park, her excitement gets the better of her. She barks and strains at the leash to go across to them, although she has never been allowed off-lead so the outcome of her inquisitiveness is at present unknown. This will be the next part of Daxy’s training.

TRUST IN ME

Relationships are built on trust and respect, so the focus of Daxy’s training and behaviour plan is to ensure Naomi and her family give her confidence that any decision they make will protect her. This will lead to her being more relaxed when visitors call or when she is

left alone for periods of time. At present Daxy’s separation anxiety is low level, but it must be addressed without delay to avoid the unpleasant effects it can have on family life.

At three years old, Daxy has a lot to learn, but she’s very bright and picks things up quickly. I’m sure this little Russian Dachshund will soon become the dog Naomi and her family had dreamed of. ●

About the author



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Daxy will afford Naomi due respect, and Naomi will be confident that she will deal with any situations as they arise



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Listen up!

Bear's all ears when he hears the word 'dinner'.
Nicola Johnson, West Yorkshire

**STAR
PICTURE**





Take no notice

"But surely the sign doesn't apply to me?" says Lola.
Rachel Gower, West Midlands



Bluebell boy

Louis's having fun on his woodland walk.
Stacey Foo, Derbyshire



Flat out

It's been such a busy day for little Fifa.
Simone McKendry, Norfolk



Lord of leisure

Only the best furry bed will do for Russian aristocrat Dmitri.
Gail Ramsey, Essex



Row of rosettes

"Hey, didn't we do well!" laugh Marley and Barney.
Carrina King, West Sussex

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TUFFIES



What a difference a year makes!

I've been with my human Mommy for over a year now and I have to say I'm having a great time. She says I'm a cheeky monkey as I'm often up to mischief. One of my favourite things is to grab anything she's dropped on the floor and run away as fast as I can with it. Oh how she loves to chase me around. She especially loves it when I go super-fast and have my mad minutes. There's no way she can catch me!

She also loves the way I speak, so I try my best to do this as high and loud as possible, especially when I'm excited, and sing her the song of my people. She says I could compete with a soprano opera singer the notes I can hit. All the neighbours love it too.

I get especially excited when she comes home from work when I've spent the day with Grandma and Grandad. I have to put a toy in my mouth and run around her really fast,

singing my heart out, and I think I might burst with happiness. I can still be really loud even with a toy in my mouth. I know she likes this greeting as she snuggles me up, and I give her lots of kisses – well, she needs a good wash when she's been at work all day.

I love it when I'm allowed to run off-lead over the field with my doggie friends Rufus, Cassie, Penny and Alice. Rufus is a Miniature Schnauzer like me but a bit older. He's my hero as he's very clever and knows lots of tricks (like how to sneakily nick treats from pockets...). He's taught me so much.

Cassie, Penny and Alice are all my girlfriends – who needs just one? I love getting muddy with them but I hate having a



bath. When my Mom tries to bath me, I crawl up her arms and end up on her head like a hat, clinging on for dear life.

It's exhausting being so cute as everyone wants a piece of me. Mind you, I can't complain; it's been a very good year! ;)

Bertie McSquirty & Nicola Briggs, via email

Sweet revenge

I am sure many dog walkers have the same problem I suffer from when I take my German Shepherd Dog, Skye, out for her walk.

In our street live two small terriers who throw themselves violently at their front window, barking and growling aggressively, when any dog passes their house. Their owner is completely unconcerned and has never tried to control them when I go past with Skye. Skye would become extremely tense and react by pulling on her lead, trying to reach the window – all very unpleasant.

One morning, walking past the house on my own without Syke, I noticed the householder had pulled a chair up to the window and was sitting reading his paper. I had an idea...

I rushed home and collected Skye. As we approached the house, she became tense



and started growling. The next moment two small furies launched themselves at the window, one landing on the chair, right in the middle of the newspaper. Pages went flying and a cup on the arm of the chair tipped over. The man leaped to his feet yelling.

I stopped and made Skye sit and lie down, walked on a few yards, then went

back past the window again, repeating the exercise, all the time praising and rewarding her when she remained calm and quiet. Chaos continued in the window, the small furies leaping on and off the chair, the paper in bits, the man trying to catch them.

He opened the window, yelling at me to move on. I replied I was training my dog, and perhaps he could do the same. He swore at me. I continued our exercises for a few minutes more to press home the point, then walked away.

Has the situation improved with the small furies? No, they are as aggressive as ever when a dog passes, though the chair has been moved away from the window. Skye, however, is much better since our training, and no longer becomes so tense on approaching the house. Also, revenge is sweet!

Sheila Bowen-Colthurst, via email

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Our panel of experts



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specialises in dog training and behaviour using methods based on understanding and communication. She runs The Canine Centre.



Paul Manktelow
BVMS MSc GP Cert DMS MRCVS

regularly appears on our TV screens as a leading vet. Paul is also principal veterinary surgeon at the UK's largest veterinary charity PDSA and is the founder of the pet health website vitalpethealth.co.uk



Libby Sheridan
MVB MRCVS

graduated from Dublin Vet School and worked in a small animal practice before joining the pet food industry. She then set up her own business offering specialist business and communication support to the pet care industry.



Alison Logan MA, VetMB, MRCVS

has worked in small-animal practice since qualifying as a vet in 1989. She enjoys consulting and has a special interest in internal medicine. She has also written for various magazines, books and professional publications.



Stuart Simons is chair of the British Dog Groomers' Association, director of grooming for the Pet Industry Federation, and a

Master Groomer for the National Association of Professional Creative Groomers. He owns Groom Dog City, a leading grooming salon in London.

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Mysterious lump

Q When I was grooming my dog the other day, I noticed a 2cm lump, right next to his bottom. It doesn't look sore or anything, but it definitely sticks out, and I'm worried about what this might be.

Graham Finch advises...

A I would definitely suggest you get this checked out at the vet surgery as soon as possible, as the worry here is that this may be a tumour.

There are two types of tumour vets occasionally see in this site. The first is what is called a hepatoid tumour; these are slow-

growing, but can ulcerate over time. The second is an anal gland tumour, which is a nasty tumour that can potentially spread to other sites in the body.

That being said, of course, without an examination it's hard to say exactly what this lump is, so I would suggest you make an appointment to see your vet.

Double teeth

Q My young collie appears to have double fangs! She is eight months old, and on both sides of her upper jaw she has two canine teeth instead of just one. They do not seem to be affecting her in any way – she doesn't show signs of pain when she's eating, and she manages to eat dental chews fine. Is this a problem?

Alison Logan advises...

A It is not unusual for there to be a short period of time while a young dog is teething for both baby and adult upper canine teeth to be present, but this should only be briefly noticed because the baby teeth should shed. This is why the alternative adjective 'deciduous' is used to describe the baby teeth, just as a deciduous tree loses its leaves in the autumn.

Sometimes, however, the baby canine teeth are retained along with their permanent adult counterparts, as can also be the case with other teeth. The resulting overcrowding of the teeth can lead to dental disease, despite good dental homecare.

In your collie's case, now that she is eight months old the baby teeth are unlikely to fall out of their own accord, so your vet will probably recommend extraction of the retained baby canine teeth under general anaesthetic.

Basset Fauve de Bretagne, posed by a model. Pic © Tim Rose/www.timrosephotography.co.uk



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“He barks at nothing”

Q I have an elderly West Highland White Terrier who has started acting quite strangely recently. He will stare into corners, or suddenly stop and bark at nothing in particular. He doesn't stop barking until I call him or touch him, then he seems a bit startled. What is going on?

James Farrell advises...

A Dogs that are getting on in years can start to suffer from dementia. Unlike in humans, not a lot of research has been done into dementia in dogs. However, there are some supplements available that can be given to dogs to support their brain function.

A balanced diet – a senior variety food, with good-quality, easily digestible ingredients – is also important in helping dogs as they get older.

A trip to the vet would be wise, before assuming that not much can be done. Your vet will probably recommend blood tests to check your

Westie's liver function (a failing liver can affect the brain), and check out your dog's heart and circulation. If there are problems with these, then medication can often improve the situation, bringing back some quality of life to your pet.

If the odd behaviour has been of a sudden onset, it is possible that it could be caused by ingesting poison, in which case your dog will need medical support while he overcomes the effect of the toxin.

It could also be a form of fit, or an indication that he is starting with epilepsy. Again, medical intervention will be needed, and the sooner a diagnosis is made, then the better his chance of recovery.

If nothing more can be done, then it is a case of keeping your dog as happy as possible. Avoid

changing his environment too much, so that he isn't startled by things and knows his way around (his eyesight may well be failing too), and keep his interest up by regular fuss, and attempts to engage him with toys and food.

When you feel his quality of life is such that he is having more bad days than good, then it is time to let him go. Your vet will discuss all the options with you, and help you through the difficult decision time when it arrives.

One final thought: if the behaviour is always occurring in the same area of the house, and he is staring at the same spot all the time, then check it out thoroughly. Dogs have superior hearing to humans and a highly developed sense of smell. It may be that there is actually something he feels he has to bark at, which we can't detect.



West Highland White Terrier, posed by a model. Pic © Tim Rose/www.timrosephotography.co.uk



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Dignified end

Q My dear friend, Hector, is sadly approaching the end of his life. He is a 14-year-old collie cross, who is now deaf and has started forgetting about his housetraining. He still eats well and likes to go for a walk, although over the past year it has become more of an amble at my heels. I am really hoping that he will pass away in his sleep, but I do not want him to suffer.

If I have him put to sleep, how will I know when is the right time, and will I have to stay with him? And what happens to his body afterwards? I am sorry to be asking such sad questions, but I don't know who else to approach. He deserves a dignified end after all this time; I really treasure all that he has given me.

Alison Logan advises...

A You are asking the questions that worry us all as dog owners and dog lovers. We have the privilege of being able to spare our canine companions from suffering, but it is indeed a difficult decision to know when that time has come. If your dog is seriously ill with no likelihood of recovery to full health, then making the decision is more straightforward, albeit still very upsetting.

On the other hand, the elderly dog who is simply in his twilight years poses more of a dilemma. Quality of life is the major consideration – not only for your dog, but also for you and your family. It needs careful discussion so that whenever the decision is made will be the right time. I do always endeavour to ensure that everyone agrees with the decision. I have sent owners away with their pets if I've not been convinced that all parties are in agreement.

Whether or not you stay with your pet when the time comes is a separate issue, and a matter of personal choice. Some owners prefer to remember their pet when he was alive; others feel a need to be with their pet as he slips away. There is no requirement for you to stay if you do not wish to do so. Again, it needs to be what is right for you at that time.

Collie cross, posed by a model



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Having your dog put to sleep involves your vet injecting an irreversible overdose of an anaesthetic agent into a vein, usually in a forelimb, but on occasion in a hind limb. If the vein is not easily visualised when raised, your vet may insert an intravenous catheter. On rare occasions – if, for example, a dog is anxious – it may be necessary to give an injection of sedative into the rump first. It is hard to predict how quickly an individual will pass away once the final injection has been given, and sometimes there may be involuntary movements, gasping and/or vocalisation.

Another decision you will have to make is about what to do with your dog's body after he has passed away. Your veterinary practice is likely to have an arrangement with a pet crematorium so that your dog can either be cremated anonymously, or individually with his ashes returned to you in a container of your choice. Burial in your garden is feasible too, although you will need to bear in mind the size and depth of hole required, and the weather conditions at the time.

At the risk of sounding flippant, it is not unusual to feel at some point after parting with a elderly pet that a black cloud has been lifted, a weight removed from your shoulders, confirming that it was the right time. Remember that all the years of happy memories will live on long after he has gone.



Itches & irritants

Q I employ a cleaner who uses a lot of carpet cleaning products, and my little Shih Tzu recently got some on her pads. Ever since then, she has been very agitated and has been licking at her paws a lot. It's been several weeks now, and her pads and toes all look fine, but do you think something has caused a reaction?

Graham Finch advises...

A We vets do occasionally see irritant dermatitis. This is where some chemical or material causes a direct reaction in the skin, setting up inflammation.

However, we would then expect to see redness, and even ulceration and discharge at the site of contact, and the skin would not look normal.

When the skin looks normal, but there is still a significant itch or irritation present – itchiness in dogs is shown by biting, licking and chewing, as well as scratching – this is an immediate marker for a skin allergy in my book. Of course, household chemicals and cleaning products may exacerbate an allergy, but they may not be the direct cause as such. I would suggest you pop your dog along to your vet for a check-up and chat.

Shih Tzu, posed by a model



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“Help, my dog’s eaten a bath plug!”

Q I think my dog has eaten part of a bath plug! Around a fortnight ago, I saw him with something in his mouth, and I’ve just found the remainder of the plug now. Is this likely to damage his insides? Should I get it checked out?

Graham Finch advises...

A I never cease to be amazed me at what dogs will eat! Transit time in dogs – that is the time from the mouth to the other end – is around 36 hours. So, as long as your dog seems fine, has no vomiting or diarrhoea, and is eating well, it is reasonable to assume that anything indigestible will have come out of the other end by now.

That being said, it is possible for foreign objects to sit in the stomach for a long period of time (even years!) without causing problems, and then to suddenly shift position and try to work their way out through the intestine. I would suggest you keep a close eye out for any signs of illness, and pop your dog down to the vet’s if he seems at all unwell.

Crispy nose

Q My four-year-old dog’s nose has recently gone from black to a pinky brown colour and looks a bit ‘crispy’. Is this to do with the sun? Do I need to put sunblock on it, or is it normal?

James Farrell advises...

A It is common in colder weather for dogs to develop ‘winter nose’. In the colder weather, sometimes an animal’s body makes less of an enzyme called tyrosinase, which is involved in the production of skin pigment; less of the enzyme equals a paler nose.

Natural nose colour changes happen as a young puppy grows as well – a black nose can become paler, and vice versa, as the dog matures and settles into his adult colouring.

Some breeds have a paler colour nose depending on the coat colour, too.

Old age can also pale and dry a nose – just as some people gradually get lighter-coloured eyes as they age, a dog may lose pigment. Generally, though, the dog will also lose colour on his lips as well.

To begin with, I would try to keep your dog out of direct sun, as that won’t help a dry nose. However, do keep an eye on it to see if the irritation is getting worse, or if sores are developing, as pigmentation

First aid for adder bites

Q I am a keen walker and my two young Labradors usually come out walking with me. Over the summer months we often find ourselves out in the wilds, and I am concerned about snakebites. My question is quite simple: is there anything I can carry, to use if one of my dogs get bitten, prior to seeking veterinary help?



Havanese, posed by a model



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loss can sometimes be an early sign of vitiligo, an autoimmune disease that will need medical intervention.

I would avoid putting anything on the nose until you have seen a vet, as a dog's nose is extremely sensitive and you may make it worse if you apply the wrong thing. If the dog seems bothered by the dryness, then a small amount of Vaseline can be applied, just to help keep the moisture in the nose.



Border Collie, posed by a model



Tim Couzens advises...

A Luckily for us, our only poisonous snake in the UK is the adder (*Vipera berus*), which is easily recognisable by its pale grey to brown coloration, and the characteristic zigzag markings down its back. The snakes hibernate over the winter, emerging in late April to early May, as soon as the weather warms up, so you will need to take care and be on the lookout for them from then until late autumn. Adders' preferred habitats include sandy areas (such as sand dunes), the edges of woodlands, heath land, rocky areas, and moorland. They are more prevalent in certain areas of the country, particularly in the south, south-west, and parts of Wales and Scotland.

Dogs are curious by nature, and although the adder is not aggressive, it may bite in self-defence. Most bites to dogs therefore occur on the face and forelimbs. Exactly what happens next depends on the exact location of the bite (with those on the face being most serious), the size of the

dog, the potency of the venom, and how much the animal moves after the bite, as this can spread the venom around the body.

Swelling and bruising at the site of the bite are common, and these signs appear quite quickly. More serious symptoms include persistent bleeding from the bite wound, severe pain, lameness, an increase in heart and respiratory rate, high fever, drooling from the mouth, and loss of balance. In a few cases, convulsions can ensue, followed by collapse, coma and death.

My advice is to carry a combination of the following homoeopathic remedies in your bag – in liquid form so that the remedy mix is easy to give straight into the dog's mouth: Arnica 200c, Lachesis 200c, Vipera 30c, Croto hor 30c, Ledum 200c and Hamamelis 30c. Give five to 10 drops every 15 minutes. See a vet as soon as you can, bearing in mind to move your dog as little as possible to avoid the venom spreading around the body too quickly.



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Mine, all mine

Q We recently had a small family reunion and our five-year-old Border Collie, Bailey, came along for the fun. He got on with everyone brilliantly until we were all sitting down and my sister gently patted my knee. Bailey started growling. She withdrew her hand and Bailey stopped.

When I patted my sister back, he growled again. We tested this on a few other family members and Bailey reacted the same way. What is causing this and is there anything we can do to stop it?

Kirsten Dillon advises...

A Based on your description of Bailey's reaction, I would feel fairly safe in saying that he was guarding you as one of his valuable resources. I don't mean guarding you from your family because he thought they were threatening you, but guarding something he perceives to be his.

Car chase

Q My 18-month-old Border Collie is generally very obedient, but he can be stubborn when it comes to the recall. However, the greatest problem is his desire to chase cars. All the usual methods have been tried, including walking at a distance from the road, changing direction and trying to distract him, and we've even tried various control collars, but all to no avail.

The problem is made difficult because when he's sitting – even sitting by the roadside, as you'd do when you're waiting to cross – he makes no attempt to chase traffic. Having used all methods known to me, what, if anything, can you suggest?

Nick Jones advises...

A So, first thing's first. I think it will pay you to come back to basics with your Border Collie's training, and ensure that all aspects are in good order – including his recall. Consider reverting to using a long line so that he doesn't have the option of not recalling when you ask.

Hold the long line at first, then allow your dog to drag it along once the recall is as you would like it to be. He shouldn't

be allowed to ignore your recall request at any time, so use high-value motivation and rewards as you see fit, and enforce the recall by 'reeling him in' with the line, as and when needed. This could be a three-month process alone.

On top, I would suggest you look at basic rules and manners within the home too, and I would encourage you to seek the help of an experienced trainer for issues both in and out of the home, as despite having put in a good deal of

work, you appear to be struggling still.

Otherwise, let's look at the main area you have presented. I'm a little confused as you say your collie is well behaved with traffic when he's sitting, but if (I presume) he is standing or walking, then he will try to chase cars. You can't answer my question of course, so I'll have to make a few assumptions along the way and hope I hit the mark!

The herding breeds – and collies in particular – have a high drive for this chasing behaviour. They clap eyes on the fast-moving object and feel compelled to go after it. The dog does not appreciate how dangerous this behaviour is (particularly in relation to cars, of course), and ideally we would need to address this from day one of puppy ownership to prevent a habit forming.

Training would involve simply sitting back from the road at a safe distance,



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There is much that can be done to help Bailey change how he reacts when people touch 'his human'.

First, acknowledge the growl and don't ever push him or test his limits by trying to make him accept what you're doing. Dogs don't think that way. The easiest and safest way to change how he feels is to feed, feed, feed him when other people come close or touch you.

Start simply, and with plenty of space between you, him, and the other person, and as you all move slowly closer together, feed him treats and ask the other person to do the same. Once you have briefly touched, end the session there. Build up to longer interactions until the person can put their hand on your leg and leave it there indefinitely and vice versa.

If Bailey associates people touching his valuable 'possessions' with being fed tasty treats, he should begin to enjoy it, rather than complain.

Running rings

Q Our nine-month-old German Shepherd Dog is ruining our lawn. He skids up and down the length of the fence, and has created a circle of mud around the edge of the lawn itself. What can we do please?

German Shepherd Dog, posed by a model



Nick Jones advises...

A This sounds like a classic case of leaving a dog alone for too long, so he ends up making his own enjoyment. The problem with dogs charging round in repetitive circuits is that it's often associated with increased stress levels in the dog, and as a behaviourist, I've seen this many times. The owner thinks the dog is just expending energy (and this may be correct to a degree), but in the process, the dog becomes more wound-up, as running in circles is not a stress-relieving activity. It can eventually lead to obsessive routines that are detrimental to the dog – and to your lawn, of course! I wouldn't be surprised if your dog barks as he runs along the fence line, too.

The best course of action would be to restrict your dog's access to this part of the garden unless you can be present, and to take him out for exercise away from the home instead.

By overseeing his time in the garden, you can redirect him towards chewing a toy, or playing a game of fetch or similar with you. There are a number of good books of dog games available, which will provide ideas for taxing his brain and keeping him occupied.

Try putting him on a long line (10ft to 30ft in length, depending on the size of your garden) when you're out there with him. Then, if he starts running round or barking at the fence, you can stop him more easily by standing on the end of it, and then redirecting his energies towards something less destructive!

rewarding calm, controlled behaviour, and making the experience as normal as possible. Gradually, the exercise would be made more demanding (coming closer to the kerb, going to busier roads, or to places with heavy lorries, and so on) as the dog visibly settles and matures.

It would seem that your 'silver lining' in this situation is that your collie will sit at the roadside free from concern, and it's the aspect of walking near traffic that causes the problem. A crafty yet slightly convoluted way to address this would be to take him by car to a point on the roadside, and then carry out a 'sit and watch' session. Have him sit a few feet back from the kerb and ask him to do a simple sit-stay under your control, using high-value treat rewards. Try this in various locations.

Being food driven is useful as it: a) gains the dog's attention; b) keeps that attention; and c) rewards calm behaviour,

and then that sequence can continue for the duration of the training session. Easy in theory, of course! If you think it will help, your dog could work for his daily food allowance in this situation (ideally split into two or three sessions a day), so that you're hand-feeding him until this is resolved, rather than him eating from his bowl at home.

So there he is, sitting next to you, being calm and obedient. Now we need to introduce movement. As always, start slowly by asking him to walk just one step forwards, and then sit and feed him again, or use the 'stay' command. Steadily repeat "Stay", combined with a flat open hand in front of him. Try to avoid excessively bright tones in your voice, which might get him more excited. Then gradually build in more steps, walking parallel to the road, but stopping when things start to become difficult. Stay at that level until you make

another breakthrough, and so on as you progress.

It's best to begin these sessions at relatively quiet times of day, less busy locations, and also to avoid wet roads, as the rushing sound of the traffic can make a dog more reactive and excitable. Ensure that your equipment is totally secure, and I would suggest you try using a double-ended lead for extra control, with one end fixed to a broad, soft, neck collar and the other to either a body or head harness, whichever he is most comfortable with. From there it's a case of ensuring you commit to regular practice sessions, without fail, and your collie should come good.

Given the dangers involved in dogs chasing traffic, I would strongly advise you to contact an experienced trainer who can oversee these initial training sessions to make sure you're on the right track, and provide advice and support.



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First-time owner

Q I've recently taken on a two-year-old male crossbreed. I've never had a dog before and find some of his behaviour quite perplexing. He pants a lot, barks at the least little thing, chews objects around the house, and digs up my plants.

I wonder if this is normal and if there's anything I can do about it? I thought he would behave in the house, but it seems he doesn't know how. I love him to bits, but don't want my home wrecked! Can you help, please?

Sue Gilmore advises...

A The behaviours you describe are quite normal for dogs that are welcomed into a new home and given every comfort we think they need. However, a few rules and boundaries are needed, as well as teaching him some basic manners, which will help you both.

Dogs pant to cool down and lose body

heat that builds up during warm weather or in our centrally heated homes. They sweat through their pads and lose heat through their ears and mouth. Panting helps to regulate body temperature, but they also pant in order to deal with pain, so consider having your dog checked by a vet to ensure there is nothing medically wrong.

With regard to him barking at the least disturbance, this is quite normal for active dogs, especially when they are introduced into a new home or area. Vocalising is an important means of communication for dogs and they will often bark to get a response from others in the vicinity. Barks mean different things, which I am sure you will be able to understand more fully as time goes by. For instance, a sharp, aggressive bark may indicate that there's a stranger approaching your home, while yappy, puppy-like barking indicates excitement. Watch your dog's body language

when he barks and you will get some indication about why he is barking. Of course, if he just stands outside in the garden and barks for extended periods of time, he may just be bored and need stimulation to distract him.

Chewing and digging are also natural canine instincts, especially for terrier breeds. Some dogs hide bones, items or food for future use; others find it fun to dig up plants and chew them. They generally get a reaction from their owners for doing this, so it's up to you to teach him not to dig up your prized plants!

I would encourage you to seek the help of a qualified, professional behaviourist, who will be able to answer your questions and demonstrate how to address these problems, and ensure you enjoy the relationship you are forming with your dog. It makes sense to get things right from the start, as you are likely to be together for many years!



Crossbreed, posed by a model



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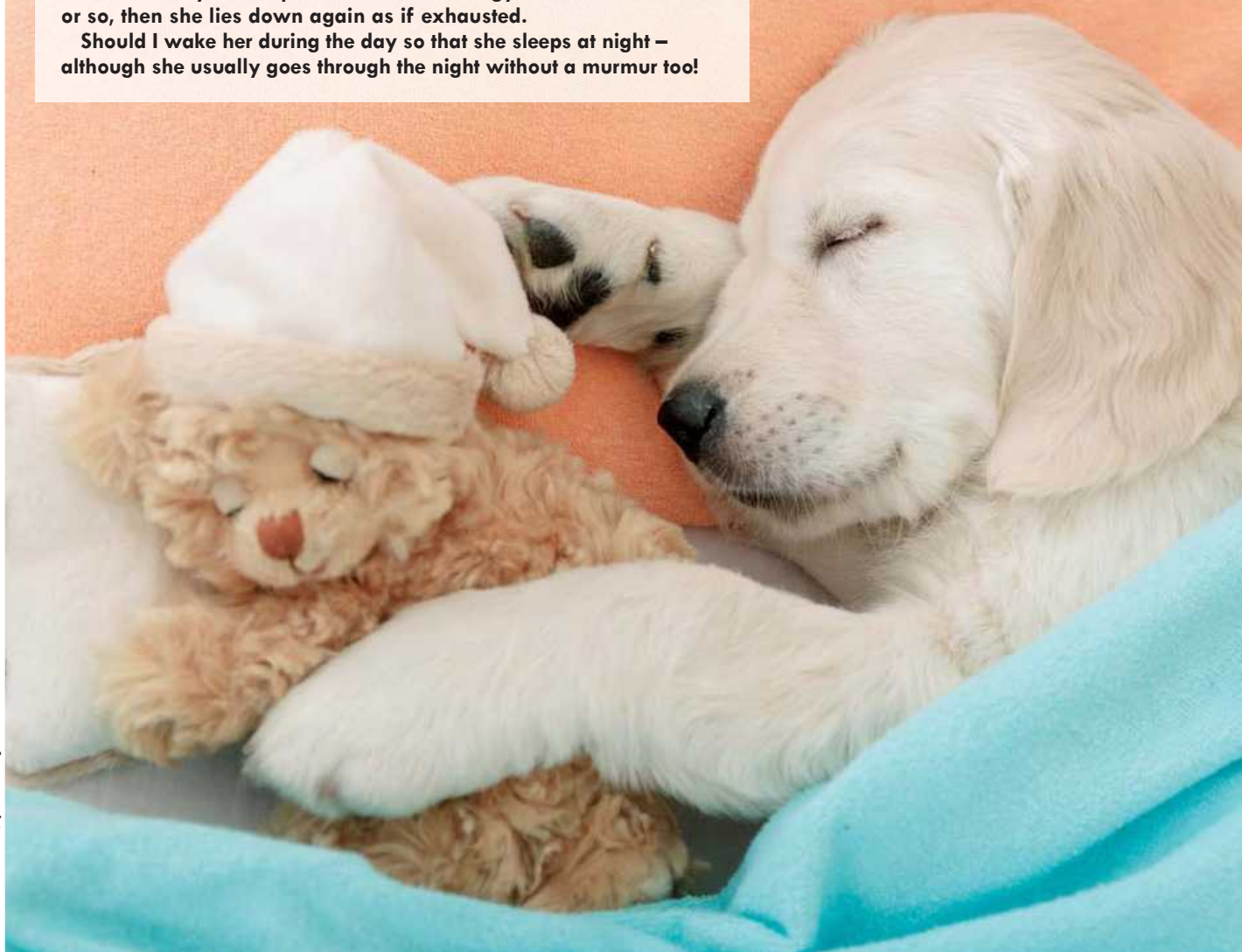
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Sleepy head

Q My 10-week-old puppy sleeps a lot – is this normal? Quite often I check to see if she's breathing, because she goes into a deep sleep throughout the day, in between periods of intense activity. Her explosive bursts of energy last for 10 minutes or so, then she lies down again as if exhausted.

Should I wake her during the day so that she sleeps at night – although she usually goes through the night without a murmur too!



Golden Retriever, posed by a model

Sue Gilmore advises...

A The sleep pattern you describe seems to be perfectly normal for a growing puppy. Sleeping through the night indicates that she is getting adequate rest, and having naps during the day between bursts of energy is exactly what dogs do – they rest in readiness for activity. Going back to before the time when dogs were domesticated, they had to have vast

reserves of energy to hunt prey and survive, and it's a latent characteristic of our pet dogs that they do the same. Most dogs are ready to go on a walk at any time of the day or night; if something stimulates their interest, they're ready for action.

Puppies grow very quickly – they go from birth to maturity within 18 months for large breeds, 12 months for smaller breeds. Contrast that with human babies,

who take roughly 12 years to reach adolescence. It takes a lot of energy to grow, so sleep is an essential mechanism to conserve energy in all young animals, be they human or canine. You've noticed that your puppy is full of energy and into everything one minute, and the next minute she's sound asleep. It's all perfectly normal, but if you have any doubts about your puppy, do check with your vet. Better safe than sorry.



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“Should we get a ‘family protection dog’?”

Q We are currently in the process of looking for a new family pet, with the German Shepherd Dog being top of the list. It has been suggested that we look at ready-trained ‘family protection dogs’ as a possible solution. However, I’m not sure this would be a wise thing to do, even though we have had dogs in the past. I would appreciate your expert’s views of the pros and cons of this subject.

Kirsten Dillon advises...

A In my capacity as a pet dog behaviour counsellor, I would strongly advise against this.

Firstly, a German Shepherd Dog bred to do protection work may have inherited traits, such as a high work drive (the desire to be permanently busy), hyper-vigilance (an inability to switch off), and/or fear-related reactivity (described as suspicion or wariness towards strangers), as well as a heightened propensity to guard his property and people.

Although such a dog may appear to be the ideal protector, the reality is so very different.

More often than not, a protection dog will be trained using more punitive methods than your regular pet dog. This has been proven to break down trust between dog and handler, and often has fallout because many of the dog’s natural fears and desires are suppressed, not changed. Even a force-free trained protection dog will be very difficult to take out and about, and you will find he will come with lots of restrictions as he may not be very sociable.

Additionally, as a dog like this will not have been with you and your family since early puppyhood, you will never know whether he has been correctly socialised and introduced to the things he needs to be, and in the manner he needs to be. A dog

that has negative, or indeed, insufficient socialisation before the age of 16 weeks will always have issues, and these often result in aggressive and inappropriate responses to those things and situations they’ve never encountered or interacted with. If that happens to be certain types of people or other dogs, say, your life may well be made a misery, and you’ll have no choice but to avoid certain places and situations.

Much of a dog’s desire to work for us, and live alongside us, stems from the bond we form with them, and this is achieved by living with them in our homes, and treating them with kindness, respect and care.

Get a German Shepherd Dog (GSD) by all means, but source one from a reputable breeder, and make it clear it is to be your family pet and nothing more. Meet both of the prospective puppy’s parents, make sure they are friendly towards you, and also ensure the breeder has had them carefully health-tested, as GSDs are prone to hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, eye problems, haemophilia (males), epilepsy and CDRM (a wasting disease that affects the hind limbs).

Then seek out a really good puppy class where the trainer only uses positive and force-free methods. Do this and you will have a wonderful, loving, loyal – and most importantly safe – family pet.



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Rocket launcher!

Yorkshire Terrier, posed by a model



Q How can I stop my nine-month-old Yorkshire Terrier barking out of the bay window in our lounge? When I am out, he sits on the back of the sofa and then launches himself at the window, making a dreadful noise in the process! My neighbour has told me what's been happening, and I'd like to address it.

Nick Jones advises...

A What our dogs do when we're out of the house is important, and when I go to a home to look at a case of separation anxiety, I'm keen to address anything like this too. Such behaviour inevitably has an impact on a dog's overall stress levels in and out of the home, and most of my work is about looking at ways to reduce stress for the dog, regardless of how that stress is being displayed.

So, on a practical level, there are a few things that come to mind that can be done to stop this kind of behaviour:

- Option 1: Keep the door to the lounge closed. Simply stopping access is often

the quickest and easiest approach in cases like this. Try to ensure your Yorkie can't redirect his behaviour out of windows in other rooms by thinking ahead a little. Ensure he has a quiet location of his own, with a soft bed, warmth, light and water. It might be worth recording his sounds or movement in your absence to give you useful feedback and peace of mind.

- Option 2: Move the sofa away from the window so he can't use it as a platform from which to launch himself! This may help, but being a smaller breed, he is also likely to be quite resourceful and to carry on somehow...
- Option 3: Use an opaque window film that blocks his view. I've had lots of good feedback from owners who've used this simple and relatively cheap option. Your Yorkie won't be able to see out any more, but it allows most of the light in, and should resolve the problem. You might only need to fit it about a third of the way up the window, and, after a few months of

calm, quiet behaviour, you can begin to gradually lower the level over a matter of weeks.

The picture below shows one home I visited where a client with a similar problem to yours had used this method to great effect.



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Muzzling at the salon

Q A new groomer has taken over the salon that my Bichon Frise has been going to for years. She seems very pleasant and I had no qualms about taking my dog there, but when I went to pick him up, she said she'd had to use a muzzle because he'd tried to bite her. This doesn't sound like him, and I'm sure my old groomer would have told me if she'd ever had to do the same.

My dog seemed relaxed and perfectly fine with her when we left the salon, and she's given him a very smart, clean trim, but what's your opinion of groomers muzzling dogs? Should we look for a new salon?

Stuart Simons advises...

A First, I would have asked the groomer what experience she has. All professional groomers work differently and judge danger in different ways. Personally, I very rarely muzzle dogs unless they are showing very strong signals of aggressive behaviour. On the other hand, I do employ amazing groomers that will muzzle long before I would have done. It is not, in my opinion, anyone's place to criticise this practice, as it is down to the groomer. At the end of the day, we work with our hands, and a bite could harm our income, and also compromise the safety of your pet during the groom simply because dogs usually go for the hands – and invariably we're holding scissors.



As long as your dog came out of the salon happy and looking lovely, I don't see a need to search for an alternative groomer. I would imagine that as this groomer gets to know your Bichon, she will understand his body language more, and know what will 'press his buttons' and, in turn, go softly in those areas.

Bichon Frise, posed by a model

Fussy feeder

Q We have had Jack, our Jack Russell puppy, for about a week. He is adorable and we have all fallen in love with him. The problem is that he has not been finishing his food, so I have hand-fed him.

He is now refusing to eat any food unless I feed him by hand. I have checked with the breeder, who says he didn't do this when he was with her. What should I do?

Sue Williams advises...

A As long as Jack is not showing any signs of being ill, then I would not worry if he isn't eating all his food. It's probably

due to the transition process from the breeder's house to your home, and he may be a bit unsettled, which can affect appetite.

I would avoid hand-feeding him; instead I suggest feeding him in his crate (if you are using one), or wherever you normally feed him, and leaving him alone to eat for approximately 20 minutes. After this time, remove his dish, along with any uneaten food. You should find that he quickly starts to eat from his bowl again.

You do not say how many meals you are giving him each day, so this may also be a factor. From around nine weeks of age, I find most pups require three meals per day. If you are in any way concerned about his health, or if he continues not to eat, please consult your vet.

Jack Russell Terrier, posed by a model



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"Should I be giving him grains?"

Q My friend keeps telling me not to feed grains to my dog. Are they correct in saying this? Are grains bad for dogs?

Libby Sheridan advises...

A Buying dog food can be a daunting experience. There are a huge number of products available now, and they often appear to be offering different things. Grain-free food, for one, is increasing in popularity.

Essentially, you are looking for a balanced food; one that contains complete nutrition.



There is no evidence that grain is bad for dogs. In fact, many grains are nutritionally beneficial; they include many vitamins and minerals, and are high in fibre and essential

fatty acids. These are all important nutrients for your dog.

However, if you are concerned that your dog may have intolerances to an

ingredient in his food, then it is important you speak to your vet. They will be able to offer advice on how to manage this, and give you correct guidance on nutrition.

Golden Retriever, posed by a model

First steps in grooming

Q My daughter is 15, and absolutely crazy about dogs. Lately she's been talking about wanting to be a groomer, but no one at her school gives any advice about this as a career choice, so I hope you can help.

There appear to be City & Guilds grooming courses at our local college – can she enrol on a course at 16, or should she stay on at school to do her A-levels first? What else can she do in preparation? We'd be grateful for any advice you can give.

Stuart Simons advises...

A There are many options when it comes to training in pet grooming. It is currently an unregulated industry, and anyone can become a dog groomer without any formal professional training – something I am trying my hardest to stop...

City and Guilds is currently the only qualification on the UK framework, although there are other very good qualifications out there. I wouldn't recommend an online course simply because, in my opinion, to be a safe groomer you need practical experience, not just knowledge.

City and Guilds qualifications offer both at many local agricultural colleges. There are also private schools that offer shorter courses in City and Guilds qualifications, but these are a little more expensive.

For more information on training as a groomer, contact the Pet Industry Federation on 01234 273933 or visit www.petcare.org.uk



Poodle, posed by a model



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Insurance & microchips

Q My dog is microchipped and my insurance company said it had quoted me a reduced premium on the basis of this. When microchipping dogs becomes mandatory in April, will insurers still offer a reduction, or is this concession likely to end because all dogs will supposedly be microchipped?

Mark Effenberg advises...

A Microchipping is a fantastic way of ensuring your dog can be reunited with you should a separation occur. Insurance premiums are affected by many factors – breed and age being the most obvious – however, some insurers will also take into consideration other factors, such as microchipping and vaccinating, and may offer a discounted premium or additional policy benefits if these have been carried out.

The reduction in premium offered by your insurance company may be affected by the mandatory microchipping law being enforced in April; however, your premium would probably remain static until the renewal is due.

Even without the incentive for cheaper insurance, you can rest assured you have a safety net if your pet should go missing.



German Shepherd Dog, posed by a model

Cancelling a policy

Q My elderly mum has always paid the premium for her dog's insurance policy yearly in a lump sum, rather than monthly, as it worked out cheaper that way, and she didn't want to pay more for the benefit of monthly budgeting. Her dog is now 13 and she's just renewed the policy (at considerable expense because of his age, I might add!). If something happens and she

loses him, will the insurer refund the remaining months?

Mark Effenberg advises...

A Insurance policies are typically taken out for a 12-month term and various payment options are offered by different companies, with or without additional charge for a monthly payment scheme. If the annual premium has been paid in full and this

is cancelled in the middle of a policy year, the possibility of a refund is at the discretion of the insurance company as per its terms and conditions.

It may be that if a claim has been made on the policy within the year, then the full premium would still be due, but the specific policy wording should clarify the cancellation and refund procedures for the pet's insurance cover.



Don't feel like paying the vet in advance?

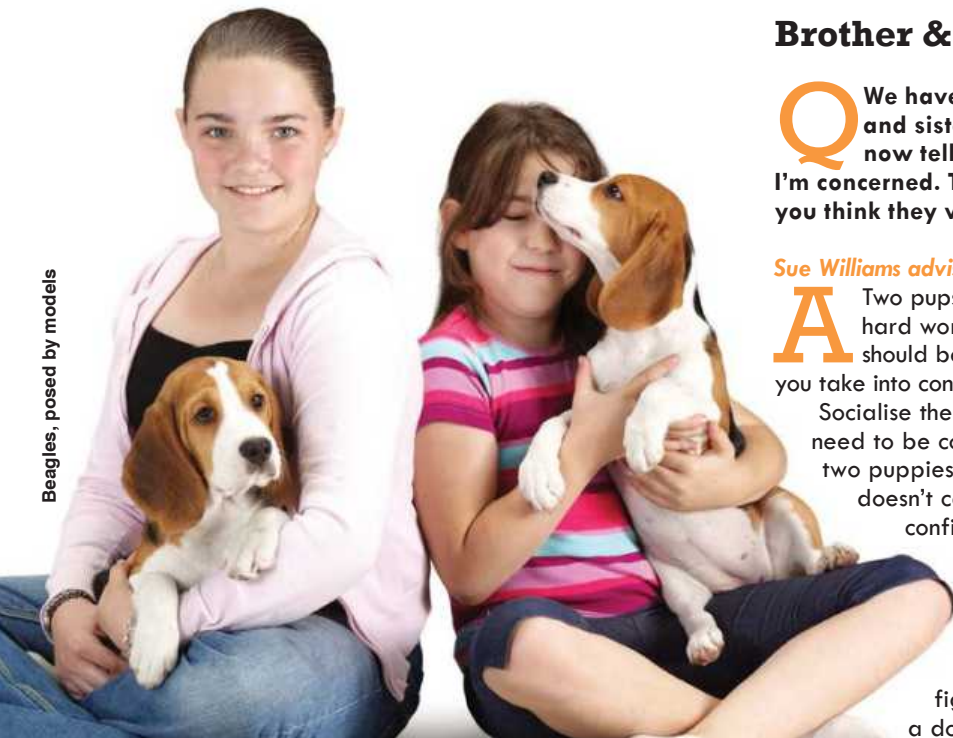
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Beagles, posed by models



Brother & sister

Q We have recently bought two puppies, who are brother and sister. We are delighted with them, but everyone is now telling us we should never have got two puppies. I'm concerned. They appear OK and get on really well, but do you think they will fight when they get older?

Sue Williams advises...

A Two pups, whether from the same litter or not, are simply hard work. That said, plenty of people do it and there should be no reason for you to have any regrets, as long as you take into consideration some key points.

Socialise them separately. This is very important, as both pups need to be confident in their own right. It's often the case with two puppies that one is more confident than the other, which doesn't cause an issue until you split them up and the less confident one falls apart.

Motivating the pups to you is often harder, meaning training can be more difficult. So spend quality time training and playing with each of them separately.

There should be no reason for the pups to fight as they mature, especially as you have chosen a dog and bitch.

Puppy portions

Q We have just got a three-month old puppy. How many times a day should we be feeding him?

Libby Sheridan advises...

A Now that your puppy is three months old, you can start to think about reducing the number of times you feed him to three meals a day. Some dogs are very good at regulating their intake, and as he gets older, you might notice that he's not that interested in his middle meal.

By six months of age, most dogs will be ready for just two meals a day. As he gets closer to being a year old, and when he appears ready (in other words, he's not eating so much at a particular mealtime), you can then decide to either

stick to twice a day, or reduce his meals to once a day. It will also depend on what fits around your lifestyle.

Keep a check on his weight by taking him to the vet's to be weighed regularly. It can be hard to judge whether a puppy's growth rate is optimum, and it's important that he isn't allowed to become overweight, as this will affect his joints. Your vet or vet nurse will be best placed to advise on this.

You will find that your puppy will like to have a daily routine, so try to feed at the same time each day. Some people find that feeding their dog at the same time as the rest of family are eating is a good way of keeping them occupied!



Staffordshire Bull Terrier cross, posed by a model

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So you want a French Bulldog?



POPULARITY

Whether it's on cushions, mugs or bedding, the Frenchie's face smiles back, and his popularity shows no signs of abating. In 2013, he was the seventh most popular breed with 6,990 puppy registrations, which rose to 9,670 in 2014. Now at a whopping 14,607, you have to wonder if the breed will topple the second-place Cocker Spaniel (22,577) or challenge the ubiquitous Labrador Retriever (32,507) in the coming years.



The French Bulldog – or Frenchie, as he's known – isn't actually as French as the name suggests. The breed descends from Toy Bulldogs, who accompanied British lacemakers when they moved to France to work. There, they were developed with short-faced bull breeds, before returning to the UK at the start of the 20th century as the French Bulldog.

Flat-faced, cobby breeds are very popular at the moment – and the Frenchie, with his unique 'bat ears', is no exception, boasting 14,607 registrations with the Kennel Club in 2015, making him the third most popular breed in the UK.

Of course, it's not just his looks that account for his popularity – the Frenchie is a big character in a little body. Affectionate and good-natured, he's a lively member of the family, known for his love of people and his clownish, fun ways.

The breed's small size and easy-care coat also account for his mass appeal – this is a dog that doesn't need vast amounts of grooming or exercise (two half-hour strolls a day are more than enough for an adult), and he suits small cars, homes and gardens. Travelling by bus? Just pick him up – he's easily portable – making him quite the dog about town.



If the French Bulldog ticks your boxes

..... have you considered these less common breeds?

Boston Terrier

UK registrations in 2015: 1,956

BACKGROUND

A distant relative of the Bulldog, this dapper chap was developed in Boston towards the end of the 19th century, from bull and terrier types. Breed enthusiasts in the States formed a club in 1889, called the American Bull Terrier Club, but after opposition from Bull Terrier and Bulldog folk, the name was changed to Boston Terrier in 1891.

CHARACTER

A sociable, good-tempered dog, it's said the Boston Terrier views all strangers as friends he's never met before. Jolly and intelligent, he can become overexcited and a bit boisterous, and is said to be strongwilled and determined, too.

LOOKS

With his smart black-and-white tuxedo, the Boston is the epitome of dapper. But it's not the only jacket he wears – his short, glossy coat also comes in brindle and seal with white markings.

He comes in a range of weights – lightweight (under 6.8kg/15lb), middleweight (6.8kg/15lb to under 9.1kg/20lb), and heavyweight (9.1kg/20lb to under 11.4kg/25lb). Most are comparable in size to the Pug (6.3kg/14lb to 8.1kg/18lb) and are easily carried.

EXERCISE

He doesn't need very much physical exercise – a couple of short walks a day will keep him in good condition – but he's a smart cookie and enjoys taxing his brain. Bostons compete in agility, flyball, and rally obedience, and as excellent cuddlers, they enjoy therapy dog work, too!

IN A NUTSHELL

Mrs Tanner, secretary of the Boston Terrier Club, sums up her breed as, "Happy extroverts. They are people dogs and very trainable, but they have a very stubborn streak if they don't want to do something."

MORE INFORMATION

- **Boston Terrier Club** www.thebostonterrierclub.co.uk
- **Boston Terrier Club of Scotland** www.btcsc.co.uk
- **Northern Boston Terrier Club of England** www.northernbostonterrierclub.co.uk

HEALTH

Bostons should be tested under the BVA/KC/ISDS eye scheme, and DNA tested for hereditary cataracts (HC-HSF4).



Photos © Tim Rose/www.timrosephotography.co.uk



Boxer

UK registrations in 2015: 3,379

CHARACTER

This is one of the great clowns of the dog world. It's said the Boxer never grows up – he remains energetic long into old age, with a joie de vivre that is infectious.

Grumpy, impatient owners need not apply!

LOOKS

With his sleek, clean lines, this athletic, medium-sized dog is impressive to look at, and, with his short, glossy coat, pretty low maintenance.

With males standing at 57-63cm (22½-25in) and females at 53-59cm (21-23in), this is a medium/large breed, but he often comes across as bigger than he actually is, simply because he is such a larger-than-life character – and his bounce means he's usually a few feet taller, too!

HEALTH

Hips and hearts should be tested. Juvenile kidney disease is an issue in the breed, as is cancer and progressive axonopathy, an inherited neurological disorder. Check the Boxer Breed Council's website (www.boxerbreedcouncil.co.uk) for more information about health problems.

EXERCISE

It takes a fair amount to tire the Boxer; some say his energy is inexhaustible! A couple of hours' daily exercise is advised for an adult – but he will happily take more, and still be bouncing when he reaches home.

BACKGROUND

The Boxer originated in Germany and has breeds such as Great Danes and Bulldogs in his make-up. The name comes from a corruption of 'beisser', as the breed was developed from the Bullenbeisser (bull biter) dog.

IN A NUTSHELL

Tim Hutchings, secretary of the Cotswold Boxer Club, says, "I love their absolute youthfulness and zest for life. They are born with it from day one and it stays with them forever. They are enthusiastic about anything and everything – and are forever young at heart."

MORE INFORMATION

- Anglian Boxer Club www.anglian-boxer-club.com
- British Boxer Club www.thebritishboxerclub.co.uk
- Cotswold Boxer Club www.cotswoldboxerclub.com
- Essex and Eastern Counties Boxer Club www.essexandeasterncountiesboxerclub.co.uk
- Irish Boxer Dog Club irishboxerdog.wix.com/club
- London and Home Counties Boxer Club www.lhcbc.co.uk
- Mancunian Boxer Club www.mancunianboxerclub.com
- Merseyside Boxer Club www.merseysideboxer.com
- Midland Boxer Club www.midlandboxerclub.com
- Northern Boxer Club www.thenorthernboxerclub.co.uk
- Scottish Boxer Club www.thescottishboxerclub.co.uk
- South Wales Boxer Club www.southwalesboxerclub.com
- South Western Boxer Club www.southwesternboxerclub.co.uk
- Trent Boxer Club www.trentboxerclub.co.uk
- Tyne Wear and Tees Boxer Club www.tyne-wear-tees-boxer-club.co.uk
- West Lancs Boxer Training Club www.westlancsboxerclub.com

Pug

UK registrations in 2015: 10,087

CHARACTER

The Pug might be small, but he has a big personality and makes a charming, intelligent companion. Even-tempered, he's a very happy chappy with a fun, lively spirit. He integrates into many different types of home – whether as a companion for a single person, or as the family pet for a busy household. Young or old, he'll enjoy living his life alongside you – or, even better, on you!

LOOKS

A square, cobby dog, the Pug is described as being 'multum in parvo' – a lot in a small space. The ideal weight is 6.3-8.1kg (14-18lb). The coat is smooth, short and soft and comes in silver, apricot, fawn or black. Given the breed's health issues, it's important to check that the parents of a litter are not exaggerated. They shouldn't be overweight, the nostrils should be wide open, and the eyes should not protrude.



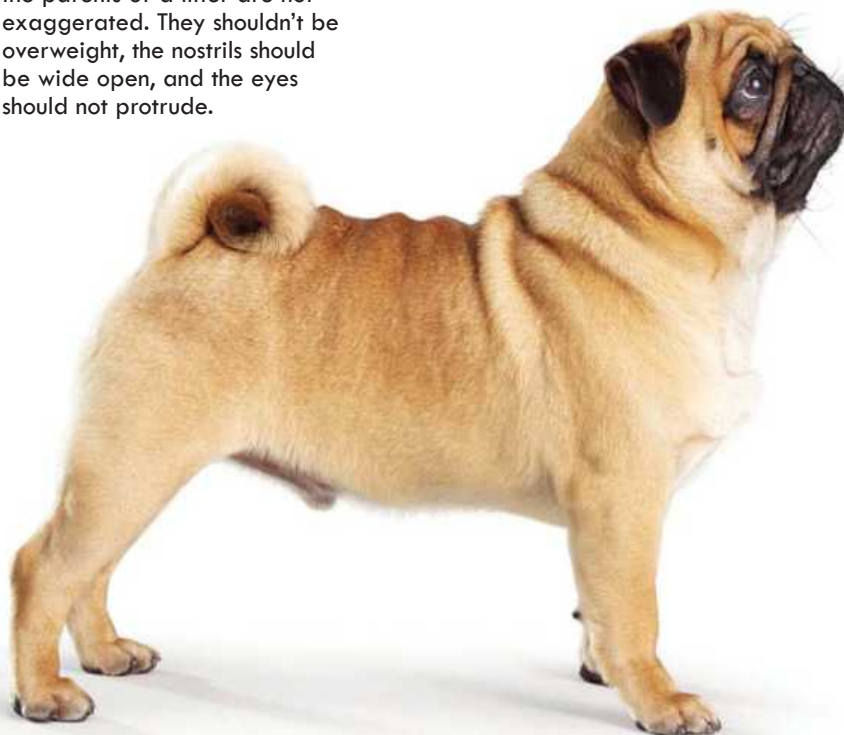
BACKGROUND

The Pug originally came from China, but he arrived in Europe with Dutch traders in the 16th century. He became associated with the Dutch, and then with the aristocracy and the royal patriots. The breed also symbolised Protestantism, as William and Mary brought the Pug with them from Holland when they took the British crown in 1689. Originally the breed was seen only in fawn, but a black pair of Pugs were introduced from the Orient in 1877.

HEALTH

A brachycephalic (flat-faced) breed, the Pug is currently categorised by the Kennel Club as 'Category Three' on Breed Watch, meaning it is one of several breeds identified as having "visible conditions that can cause pain or discomfort due to exaggerations". The Kennel Club is working closely with Pug breed clubs to address the health and conformational issues.

Breeding Pugs should be X-rayed for hemivertebrae, a spinal deformity. The Pug clubs have more information about this scheme.



EXERCISE

The Pug doesn't need extensive exercise – a couple of 20 to 30-minute strolls a day will satisfy a healthy adult. In warm weather, avoid exercise in the heat of the day – walk in the early morning or late evening, to avoid any respiratory distress, to which flat-faced breeds are especially prone.

MORE INFORMATION

- Northern Pug Dog Club www.northernpugdogclub.co.uk
- Pug Dog Club pugdogclub.org.uk
- Scottish Pug Dog Club has a group on Facebook that you can ask to join
- Wales and West of England Pug Dog Club www.wwpugdogclub.org
- West Pennine Pug Dog Club www.westpenninepdc.org.uk

IN A NUTSHELL

Adele Nicholson, secretary of the Pug Dog Club, says, "We've had Pugs for 42 years and they are just so adorable! They are cuddly, adaptable, uncomplicated dogs that are just so friendly with everyone."

Staffordshire Bull Terrier

UK registrations in 2015: 4,563

BACKGROUND

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier developed from the Bulldog and terrier (probably the Old English Terrier). The 'Bull and Terrier' was used as a fighting dog, but was also the companion and family dog of the working class, particularly in the Black Country area, where the breed developed into what is now known as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier.

CHARACTER

The Stafford really has traits from both his bull and terrier ancestors – with a tenacious spirit, great intelligence and 'indomitable courage'. For all his boldness and fearlessness, he has a very soft, loving side, and is the only breed whose standard mentions his affinity with children.

EXERCISE

The Stafford is an energetic, agile breed. Given his heritage, some can be unsociable with other dogs, so early, thorough socialisation is especially important. An hour's exercise daily is recommended, but they will happily take more if you can offer it.

LOOKS

The Stafford is a muscular, well-balanced dog, exuding great strength for his size. He stands at 36-41 cm (14-16 inches), depending on his weight.

HEALTH

The Stafford should be eye tested for hereditary cataracts (HC) and persistent hyperplastic primary vitreous (PHPV), and litters should be screened for PHPV, too. Staffords should also be DNA tested for hereditary cataracts (HC-HSF4 test) and L-2-hydroxyglutaric aciduria (L-2HGA), which is a metabolic disorder that affects the nervous system.

IN A NUTSHELL

Alan Hedges, secretary of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club, says, "What's special about the Stafford? Their temperament, which is fabulous. They are able to fit into any circumstance – whether flat or mansion – and have universal appeal."

MORE INFORMATION

- East Anglian Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club www.eastangliansbtclub.co.uk
- East Midlands Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club www.eastmidlandstaffordshirebullterrierclub.com
- North Eastern Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club northeasternsbtclub.weebly.com
- North West Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club northwestsbtclub.co.uk
- Northern Counties Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club www.ncsbtc.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club has a Facebook group. Search for the club name
- Scottish Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club has a group on Facebook – search for the club name
- Southern Counties Staffordshire Bull Terrier Society www.scsbts.com
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club thesbtc.co.uk
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club of South Wales sbtcs.wales
- Western Staffordshire Bull Terrier Society www.wsbts.co.uk

For a full list of regional breed clubs, visit tinyurl.com/gqelvzn

Bulldog

UK registrations in 2015: 6,960

CHARACTER

He might look tough, but appearances are deceptive – the Bulldog is loving and affectionate, and utterly devoted to his family. He is especially good-tempered with respectful children, over whom he will be quite protective. He can be obstinate – if he doesn't want to do something, he'll make it clear and will need skillful persuasion!

BACKGROUND

A world-recognised symbol of Great Britain, the Bulldog is one of our oldest native breeds. The breed is first documented in the 1630s, though similar 'bandogs' were mentioned earlier. As his name suggests, he was initially used to bait bulls but was also used in dog fighting – a very popular 'sport' until it was banned in 1835. From the dog pit, he moved to the show ring, first appearing in 1860. This had a big effect on the breed's looks and character. He became flatter-faced, shorter-legged, less athletic, and gentler in personality, quickly becoming a family favourite.

LOOKS

The Bulldog is a broad, powerful, compact dog. The face is short (but there should be no signs of respiratory distress) and the body is fairly short, too. There is a noticeable difference between males and females, with the latter being marginally smaller and less muscular. Males weigh around 25kg (55lb) and females 23kg (50lb).

HEALTH

The Kennel Club has listed the Bulldog as a Category Three breed, under Breed Watch, "due to visible conditions that can cause pain or discomfort due to exaggerations".

Breeding stock should have a health certificate from the breed council, after having their heart, palate, breathing, nostrils, skin, eyes, legs, patella, spine, tail and temperament examined. The Bulldog Breed Council's health page gives further information: www.bulldogbreedcouncil.co.uk

There is also a DNA test for HUU (hyperuricosuria), which causes urinary stones.

IN A NUTSHELL

Karen Hayward, secretary of the Bulldog Club (Incorporated), says, "Bulldogs are loyal in character and just so loving. They are individuals, and big, soppy bundles."

EXERCISE

The Bulldog is surprisingly active – he might amble around, looking sluggish and cumbersome, but can accelerate quickly when you least expect it! He doesn't need a lot of exercise – an hour a day is sufficient for a healthy adult.

MORE INFORMATION

- Bath and Western Counties Bulldog Club www.bathandwestbulldogclub.co.uk
- Birmingham and Midland Counties Bulldog Club www.birminghambulldogclub.com
- British Bulldog Club www.britishbulldogclub.org
- Bulldog Club Incorporated www.bulldoginc.co.uk
- Bulldog Club of Scotland www.thebulldogclubofscotland.co.uk
- Bulldog Club of Wales www.facebook.com/BulldogClubOfWales/
- East Midland Bulldog Club – call club secretary Mrs Wain 01162 782419
- London Bulldog Society www.ldnbulldog-soc.org
- Manchester and Counties Bulldog Club www.manchesterandcountiesbc.co.uk
- Northern Bulldog Club www.thenorthernbulldogclub.co.uk
- Northern Ireland Bulldog Club has a group on Facebook – search the club name
- South of England Bulldog Society has a Facebook group you can join
- Yorkshire Bulldog Club yorkshirebulldogclub.weebly.com

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Next month: So you want a Miniature Schnauzer?

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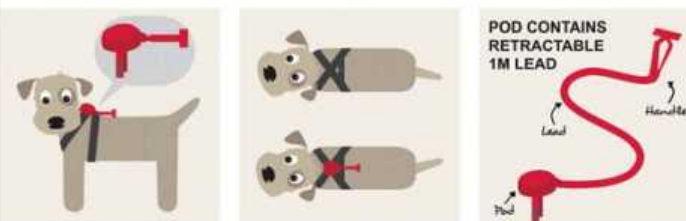
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From the dog's mouth...

Having belatedly discovered the delights of soft furnishings, **Molly** finds they're snugglier still when you put them together...



Custom-built comfort

Last month, you may remember I wrote about my newfound enjoyment of soft, snuggly items... and also of the confusion this provoked in me. I have since spent several long, thoughtful mornings considering matters. I weighed up the advantages of allowing myself to enjoy fluffy objects rather than eviscerating them; I also reminded myself of my New Year's resolutions. You may remember these included a heartfelt pledge not to let things slide in terms of my challenging and playful nature.

I will admit to you, dear readers, that I struggled for a considerable amount of time with how to reconcile these seemingly opposing desires. Then with characteristic intelligence I came up with a solution that would allow me to have my metaphorical cake and curl up in a luxuriantly cosy pile of fluff to enjoy eating it.

So here is what I decided. There was no need for me to give up on soft furnishings;

I just needed to take their selection into my own hands. Yes, I had been provided with a highly agreeable dog bed, but did this mean I should not be entitled to make use of human bedding too, should it come my way?

Clearly not. So when I spotted a handmade quilt carelessly left on a sofa I speedily availed myself of its services, contriving within a matter of seconds to be so soundly and blissfully asleep that no human would have the heart to move me. (This worked like a charm, needless to say.) The small person who owned the attractive cover did later complain that it smelt of wet dog, but you can guess how much that bothered me.

Inspired by this success in taking back the power in the situation, I began to think of other ways I could take charge. Having been left in the kitchen one day after a particularly muddy walk, I happened to glance at the hooks at the end of one of the

work surfaces. Hanging from these hooks were three clean white tea towels, two fluffy hand towels and a pair of padded oven gloves.

Well, it was the work of a minute to pull all these down onto the floor. Once I had heaped them together I climbed on top and walked round and round in circles, arranging them into a neatly flattened nest on which I could rest my damp, muddy body. My mistress let out a gratifying yelp of annoyance when she came in to discover this set-up, but again... no need to tell you, readers, how little this interfered with my enjoyment.

Following those two occasions I have spared no opportunity to get inventive with making beds for myself. Coats, socks, sofa throws, gloves, cardigans... any soft item I spot lying around the house can be surreptitiously retrieved and carefully conveyed to that warm spot on the kitchen floor I love so much.

It also occurred to me that while I love my new dog bed, there was no reason why I should have to make an 'either/or' decision in regard to this and the kitchen sofas.

So the other day I took the dog bed in my teeth and chucked it up onto a sofa. I highly recommend you give this a try with your own beds as soon as circumstances allow – the combination of soft pillow and sprung sofa is, quite simply, heaven.

So there we go. Without wishing to sound smug I am extremely pleased with myself. Once the Pandora's box of physical comfort had been opened, I was not going to manage to close it again... but like the ingenious Airedale I am, I have found a way of succumbing to its pleasures without compromising my personal integrity. ●

About the author



Molly Taylor is widely regarded as the outstanding Airedale Terrier of her generation. She

has lived with her family, who are first-time dog owners, since she was a puppy and although she has taught them all they know, they still have a long way to go. Molly enjoys sleeping, eating and country walks, and has an honours degree in kitchen bin raiding.

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